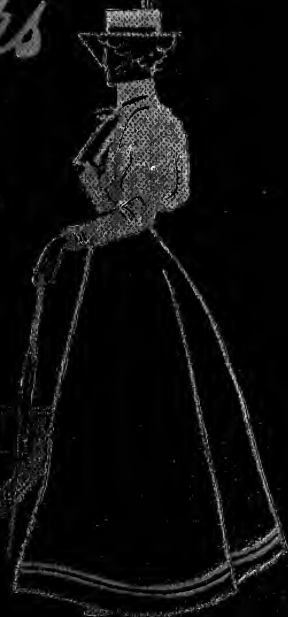
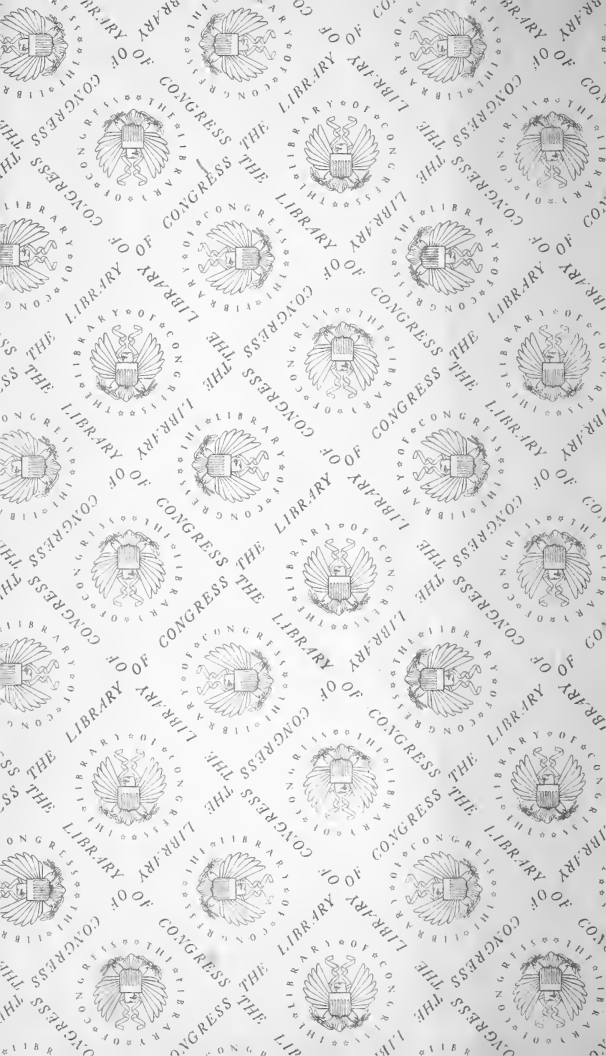
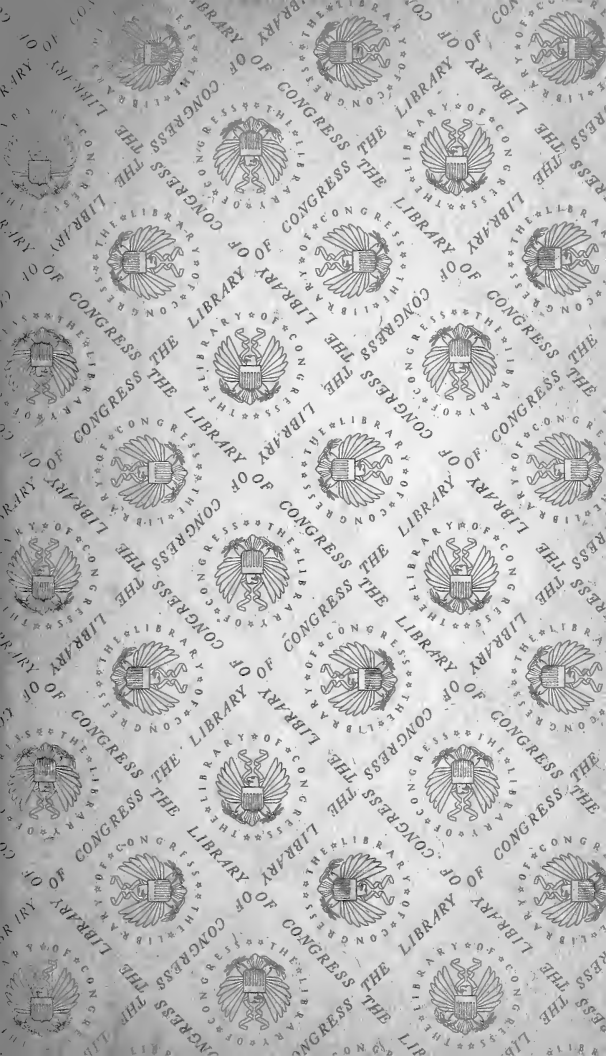


*The
Domestic
Blunders
of
Women*



BY
A MERE MAN









The Domestic Blunders of Women



The Domestic Blunders of Women

BY
A MERE MAN



WITH NUMEROUS ILLUSTRATIONS

By "YORICK" ✓

Augustus Moore.
"

NEW YORK
FUNK & WAGNALLS COMPANY
LAFAYETTE PLACE

1900

L.

TWO COPIES RECEIVED.

Library of Congress,

Office of the

COPYRIGHT 1900

BY

MAR 9 - 1900

FUNK & WAGNALLS COMPANY, Register of Copyrights.

TX295
M82

55865

SECOND COPY,

3187

Feb. 5. 1900.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION	vii
CHAP.	
I. THINGS IN GENERAL	I
II. PURCHASING HOUSEHOLD REQUISITES	9
III. WOMEN'S IGNORANCE OF THE VALUE OF MONEY	23
IV. THE MANAGEMENT OF SERVANTS	34
V. THE MISTAKES OF "THE MISSUS"	48
VI. THE HIGHLY RESPECTABLE PERSON	61
VII. THE DOMESTIC INFERNO	74
VIII. THE BOTTOMLESS PIT	84
IX. CUPBOARD SKELETONS	92
X. THE MANAGEMENT OF CHILDREN	100
XI. THE HOUSE DIRTY	118
XII. THE HOUSE HIDEOUS	130
XIII. THE BEST REMEDY FOR ALL BLUNDERS	142
CORRESPONDENCE	151



INTRODUCTION

A MERE MAN's bold and unsparing attack on woman's stronghold in the home, made originally in a serial form, provoked at once, as must have been expected, a general uprising of the sex in strenuous defense of their position and capacities.

Some few ranged themselves as his allies; but the greater number pelted him with arrow-flights of "winged words," not always feathered with discretion, not ever pointed with keen logic, but, beyond question, shot with shrewd purpose and determined aim.

Men also joined in the *mêlée*, and, no doubt, on both sides some shafts hit their mark. Now that the time has come to take a calm view of this field of onset and resistance, it is but fair, in recounting "A Mere Man's" sweeping charges, to let those who have assisted or withstood him speak also for themselves, even if they are content to con-

demn him and his views in the spirit of Lu-
cetta in the *Two Gentlemen of Verona*:

“I have no other but a woman’s reason.

I think him so because I think him so.”

Our readers will therefore find at the end of this book a selection of letters, assenting or protesting, solemn or sarcastic, grave or gay, that admirably illustrate the interest already taken by the public in the alleged “Blunders of Women,” as set forth by “A Mere Man.”

THE DOMESTIC BLUNDERS OF WOMEN

CHAPTER I

THINGS IN GENERAL



HERE would seem to be only two ways to write of women—either to call them angels, with the poets, or to abuse them as the short-legged race, with Shopenhauer, or the “slum woman” and the “cow woman,” with Sarah Grand. I have no desire to imitate any of these authorities.

My mission is one of sheer pity. I married my wife because I loved her. I have worked hard all my life because I loved her, and now I am writing this series of papers because I love my daughters who are growing up. I look back on my many years of

2 *The Domestic Blunders of Women*

hard work, during which I have earned a good income, and I ask myself, as a business man should—what have I got for it? My banking account shows me that, though my income has year by year increased, I have no more worldly riches than when I started. My check-book proves I have spent less money on myself than I did as a bachelor.

Again, I ask myself: What has become of it? The answer is very plain. It has not gone in luxuries. Dollar by dollar, dime by dime, it has been expended on rent, taxes, servants, schooling, and tradesmen's books—with a capital "T" and a capital "B." This is not very satisfactory, but I hope I am too good a business-man not to ask myself: Has it been well invested? If I have, so far, only been sinking money, what am I going to get out of it? In other words, What are my assets, and what are they worth?

My assets are my wife and my daughters. If I do not put a fictitious value on the goodwill of love, I have to admit that my wife is not an improving property—that is to say, she is not likely now to become more valu-

able to me than she has been in my home life. My daughters I must set down as a mere speculation. They may or may not turn out well.

Every man has two branches of business. His profession or employment—commonly called his “office”—and his “house.” My “office,” as I have said, has improved. I am forced to admit my “house” has not. *I*



manage my “office.” My partner manages my “house.” In every young business there are bound to be extravagances. But greater perfection in the quality of goods and economy should come with experience in management, and in time the “house” should at least show a profit on paper. When I ask myself, in my hard, business-man way: “Is the ‘house’ branch of my business better

4 *The Domestic Blunders of Women*

managed?" I am bound to admit, in spite of all the affection I have for my partner, that it is not. Not only is there no more saving, but there is no more comfort; indeed, there is less saving, and less comfort.

The next thing to consider is: Am I any worse off than other business men? In fairness to my partner, I am bound to admit that I am not. My friends all admit that whereas their "offices" bring in more money every year, their "houses" become every year a greater drain, and that they seem to get less and less comfort out of them, despite the fact that their partners have now got several assistants in the shape of growing-up daughters.

A character in "Adam Bede," if I remember right, tells that incomparable housekeeper, Mrs. Poyser, that he believes most functions of life could be much better managed by men than women. I must say, when I come to sit down and think about it, the conviction is forced upon me that he was right. I do not know any detail of domestic life that I, or any man of my acquaintance, could not

manage better than women do, but I am open to conviction of the contrary, if any woman is brave enough to come forward and refute me with proof. I do not expect or desire that women should compete with men in the business and work of the world; at the same time, I would not attempt to deny them the right, so long as they can prove their capacity. This is the very thing they are not able to do. There should be nothing simpler in the world than to manage a house, a few servants, and a few children on a regular income. As regards the cooking and servants, men manage restaurants and clubs; as regards children, men manage schools. Yet, where is the house, governed by a woman with nothing else in the wide world to do, which is as comfortably and as profitably managed as these institutions are?

The reasons for all this I have been to some trouble to discover, and I propose to take each knotty point separately, and not only show why women fail in the simplest details of administration, but to prove that any man who could give his

6 *The Domestic Blunders of Women*

time to the subject would manage a house, a few servants, and a few children to much greater advantage than any woman.

It would scarcely be worth while doing this, but for the fact that women may benefit materially by my instruction. I confess I am thinking more of my own wife and daughters than of any benevolent intentions of improving women in general. It may be said this might, with advantage, be done in the privacy of my own home. A moment's thought will prove the impossibility of any such method. A woman always regards her management of a house as perfect. At any rate, she never permits any father, husband, brother, or son to interfere. Even to offer any advice is always to be met with the stereotyped answer :

“ Oh ! you men, you think you can manage anything, simply because you can find fault with matters of the difficulties of which you have not the remotest idea. The house is woman's vocation, though we know that old maid's children and bachelor's wives are

perfect; and if you were to interfere, I should have all the servants leaving."

This, and much more equally profitless and impractical assertion, every man has heard many and many a time. No! women will not *listen* to reason or brook interference. By carefully watching their habits, however, I have noticed that they will read and believe anything that appears in print.



I have surreptitiously studied the papers which they read for "Advice to Housekeepers." I can easily understand, after reading them, why women fail absolutely in their duties. It is a case of the blind leading the

8 *The Domestic Blunders of Women*

blind. The papers I refer to are entirely written by women, and women who obviously have no houses or husbands or families to look after, or they would not be writing newspaper articles. The writers of this "advice," which is so carefully perused, seem to regard the duties of women from no more serious point of view than how to make soup out of potato skins and a chop bone; how to trim a hat; how to mend gloves, and how to furnish a house out of old orange or cigar boxes, a few yards of cheap yellow gauze, and a bunch of dyed pampas grass—all of which is mess.

It strikes me that the really serious criticism and counsel which I am prepared to give to women generally, and to my own family in particular, would have a good chance of being brought into the family circle by men in my own state, and of being read and taken to heart by wives and daughters as sadly in need of advice as mine are. Hence this book.



CHAPTER II

PURCHASING HOUSEHOLD REQUISITES



MY contention is, that any man could manage his house better than his wife, his mother, his sister or his daughters, or a combination of any of them. Good! Now to the proof. I want to give women every chance, so I will

take their own standard of men. Every woman, at some time or other, has said that the way to a man's heart is down his throat. This is a polite way of saying that men are *gourmets*, if not *gourmands*. I don't believe it, but there may be something in it. Anyway, I accept it for the moment, and it stands to reason that as most men work all their days

from the time they are boys till they are old men, and seldom get any more out of it than a cart-horse, merely harness, food, and a bed at night, they have a right to expect that their stable should be comfortable, their bran-mash fit to eat, and their rest undisturbed. It must be accepted that nearly all we earn is spent on our homes and the luxury of our women folk. What do we get out of it?

All that we ask are comfort and clothes and food. Not a very exacting ambition, surely. The question is, do we get it? Let us see.

The proudest boast of a mother is that her daughter is a thoroughly well-brought-up girl. This may mean she is able to cut out her own clothes, trim her own hats, order a pound of candles, pay her bills with her parent's money, speak French indifferently, and, if put to it, cook a chop or boil a potato. To cook a chop well is not very easy—to women—but let us suppose that a woman can cook a chop really well. That is, from the woman's point of view, the very highest

point of perfection she can reach, and having cooked a chop well, she is supposed to be absolutely proficient in all branches of her business.

This chop is, like the rib from which she sprang, the root of all evil. A woman always begins a thing from the wrong end. The chop is typical. A woman never thinks that the cooking is absolutely the last stage of the chop, and that she has not the most elementary knowledge of any other stage. A woman to whom this remark was made would say that she knows how to buy the chop. That is precisely what I want to get at. Does any woman know how to buy a chop?—that is to say, has she the very remotest idea how to buy the best chop for the least amount of money? What is the procedure? A woman wants a chop, because a chop is the first thing she thinks of. She goes round to the butcher, and in nine cases out of ten tells him to send her round some nice chops. Just imagine even a woman buying a hat on such a principle!

In the tenth case, the exceptional woman

12 *The Domestic Blunders of Women*

asks the butcher if he has any nice chops. He says "yes," of course. She asks to see them, and possibly says they look too thin, or too fat. In such cases, the butcher says they won't look too thin or too fat when they are cooked, and with this assurance they are ordered. If the husband finds fault with the chops being all fat or all bone, she says they were the best chops the butcher had—as though that was any reason for buying them—and shelters herself further by saying the servant must have spoilt them in the cooking.

An inexperienced husband who asked how much he had to pay for the advantage of eating fat or looking at bone would, in nine cases out of ten, be told that the "book" had not come in yet. In the tenth case, he would be told that Silversides, the butcher, always charged *fourteen cents* per pound for chops, and further cross-examining would elicit the fact that no allowance was made for bone or fat. No wonder that butchers make fortunes. They have only women to deal with, and there isn't a woman living who knows what beef or mutton costs per pound on the

field, and what is a fair middleman's or a butcher's profit. It is just the same with fish, poultry, vegetables, groceries, bread, or any of the other requisites of household food.



They have only women to deal with.

The shopkeeper makes any price he likes, and no woman ever knows what she ought to pay, or thinks of acquiring knowledge to enable her to make a bargain.

14 *The Domestic Blunders of Women*

And here comes in one of the most extraordinary features of the so-called economical woman. She will willingly pay the butcher for tons of bone and fat in the year, but if you ask why you can't have a cauliflower to make a half dollar's worth of tough beef palatable, you will be told cauliflowers are far too dear. Imagining they are at least five dollars a piece, you ask how much they are charging for cauliflowers? You are told eighteen cents. Thunderstruck, you ask how much they usually cost, and you are told seventeen cents and that no woman who respects herself would dream of paying the extra cent. Just imagine a woman buying a hat, and saying hat-pins to keep it on her head were too dear.

The fact of the matter is, women have not the least idea of the value of anything—least of all, money. In the first years of their married life, or management of a house, they tell you (afterwards) they were robbed. Women's idea of being robbed consists in trades-people not conspiring to look after the interest of people who do not know their

business, but are prepared to accept anything, rather than have the trouble of learning and looking after their own business, and getting the best value for the least amount of money.

In the succeeding years they have picked up a superficial knowledge of what they think are the normal prices, and these they stick to with a pertinacity that, while providing you with joints which are far too large, and are half-wasted, denies you a cauliflower or a carrot because they are a cent too dear. It is the same with fish. A woman will provide you with three times too much mackerel, costing perhaps forty-five cents, but will deny you a pound of salmon because its price is eighteen cents.

Women, I have said, have no idea of the value of anything—least of all, money. I shall have further occasion to demonstrate this, so I may now say they have no idea of business. Let me show them how men go about the conducting of the other branch of their business, namely, “the office.” I have said that when a woman knows how to cook

16 *The Domestic Blunders of Women*

a chop, she considers she is a perfectly qualified partner for a man of business. This is as false a deduction as that a man who can lay a brick is a qualified architect or builder.

Let me take an example. I would take my own business, only that it would be argued that it was exceptional, and that I was a specialist, and taking an unfair advantage. Of course, all properly conducted businesses are the same, so I will take my publisher's business, so that he, who is my partner in this book, can the better judge of the truth of my general statements, tho I may err in detail.

You, sir, are a magazine proprietor and a publisher of books, and I assume that before you undertook to publish this book you made something like the following calculations. You, no doubt, settled that a certain class of paper was necessary to print it on, and having sent for a papermaker you asked for his lowest estimate for that class of goods, telling him yours would be a large order, and that you would pay on delivery, or in three months, or in some way most convenient to

you both. Having got it, I presume you got other estimates, and took the most advantageous. The same method, I have no doubt, you followed with the printers. Having got your papermaker and your printer, no doubt you set down the rent of your office, the salaries of clerks and the amounts you have to pay me, and, to make a long story short, estimated the cost against the possible revenue from sales. If the first few numbers of one of your enterprises did not answer your expectations, I presume you would set about making alterations, cutting down expenses in one direction, and extending them in another, till you began to see a profit on your investment, and possibly established a sinking fund.

There is no use in proving this too far, because it is what every man does, and every man who has the pluck has tried to explain it to his wife, and he can do so again by giving her this book, if she is disposed to learn and apply it to her own case.

Every woman, when she marries, enters upon a new business, which at once produces

18 *The Domestic Blunders of Women*

a regular income of some kind. It is useless to argue that it does not, because, in that case, a woman simply proves her further unbusinesslike ability by embarking from purely sentimental reasons in a wild-cat speculation, no better than gambling on the turf or the Stock Exchange. Now, how has she been prepared for this venture? Has she studied her subjects thoroughly, so as to avoid being what she calls "robbed" by tradesmen, and has she studied how to cater for the public to which she appeals for support, namely, her husband?

Does she go to a butcher, for example, and ask for his estimate, and when she has got it, say:

"I intend to spend so much a week; I intend to deal with you for a year or more if you give satisfaction; and I pay every week. I know that all these things are considerations to you, and that, as a business man, steady custom and ready money are an advantage to you. Under these circumstances, what will you take off your prices, or what discount will you allow me?"

Is there any man living who can tell me such a thing could not be done?

Is there any woman living who can tell me she has done it?

If so, I shall be glad to hear it, and I think most women will be as surprised as I shall be. Every middle-class house in a large city burns from fifteen to thirty tons of coal a year. Is there any woman with a small cellar, who has written to the secretary of a coal company and offered to send her check for twenty tons of coal, provided he will deliver it as required? Independent of strikes, this would save any fairly large house about fifteen dollars a year. Women suffer under the delusion that their custom is too small to make any difference to tradesmen, and they hate and fear nothing more than to change their trades-people. To explain the folly of this, I will relate an incident in my own family life.

Some years ago we moved into a picturesque, but not very thriving, suburb. It has always been my custom to have a fresh roll for my breakfast, the rest of the house

20 *The Domestic Blunders of Women*

preferring toast or bread one day old. One was ordered from the best baker in the district. Morning after morning it arrived late, and, on my insisting on it being delivered in time, it was fetched by one of our servants without my knowledge. One day she forgot, and I discovered the foolish method of pandering to the caprices of the baker. I insisted that a letter of complaint should be written, and the account closed. My wife begged. I was firm. She wept and pleaded that the baker was the only one in the district who could make bread fit to eat. I said I didn't care; I would punish him. My family scoffed, said the baker was richer than we were, and cared nothing about our small account. I said we would see. The letter was written. The account closed. That evening the baker's man waylaid me, and begged for my custom, promising punctuality. I stood to my guns. The next morning the baker called personally, and apologized, and said, as a business man, I was right, but he hoped I would give him another trial. I said I would think about it.

His wife interviewed my wife, and his daughter interviewed my daughters. I had taught them all a lesson, and so I consented



I said I would think about it.

to renew my custom in a month. From that day, till we left, the baker's man altered his round, and my rolls were never late. Our

22 *The Domestic Blunders of Women*

bread book came to about fifty cents a week, but the baker was a good business man, and good business men cannot afford, tho they may be richer than their customers, to throw away any business bringing in twenty-six dollars a year. If women would only, as a body, learn this elementary lesson in domestic economy, they would very much lighten their lives, and the lives of everyone who is near and dear to them.

CHAPTER III

WOMEN'S IGNORANCE OF THE VALUE OF MONEY



TRUST that some of my readers will send me some account of the heated arguments which have resulted from my words being discussed, for there

never was a man yet who has not "had it all out" with his wife hundreds and hundreds of times. Every woman, however, believes that her husband is the only unreasonable person in the world. One point in my writing and publishing this book is to show that the scandalous mismanagement of women is a general grievance.

In the last chapter I spoke of the absolute incapacity of women to do their marketing

24 *The Domestic Blunders of Women*

on anything like commercial and economical lines. I think I proved conclusively, to the minds of all men at least, that any business run on the same lines as a "home" is conducted, would result not only in bankruptcy, but in the manager being censured by the courts for hazardous speculation and reckless extravagance.

I intend now to review the financial capabilities of the feminine gender. I have shown that women have no idea how to spend money. I shall now show they have no capabilities for saving money. This is the root of the whole evil, but it has many developments, as I shall show. The woman who asks her husband for "house-keeping money" simply obtains money under false pretences, for there is such a thing as criminal negligence.

Is it in the experience of any man that, having given five dollars to his wife, he has ever seen an equivalent value for it? In the first place, is it ever possible to get a proper estimate for "the things" which are to be bought? A woman says she wants "*some*"

money. You ask her, how much? She says, she can't tell exactly. Supposing you ask her to make out a list, and supposing you get it. Ask her how much it will all cost. She has not the least idea. Ask her how much each item costs. She cannot tell you. Anxious to get to your business, you say, "How much *about* will they be?" She says, about "\$8.75" and adds, "It may be a little under, and it may be a little over. In despair, you give her ten dollars.

Intent on getting her into business habits, when you return, you ask her for the change, or perhaps you wait till she wants some more money. In the first instance, she says she remembered when she was out that she owed a little bill, and thought she had better pay it, or that the saucepans wanted renewing—oh, those saucepans!—or she saw some very cheap window-blind muslin, or stockings for the children—oh, those children!

But did you ever see those saucepans, or those stockings? I never did.

In the second instance, she says, "the things" came to a little more than she an-

26 *The Domestic Blunders of Women*

ticipated. If you have kept, or can recall, the list, and try to get the price of each article out of her, she will get as far as accounting for \$8.25 or \$8.75, but farther than that she cannot remember. If you really want to get to the bottom of the whole business, you should say, "You must have lost the change." An accusation of losing money a woman always resents, with "The idea of such a thing!" She next recollects that she bought herself a pair of gloves. If you suggest she bought gloves a week ago, or that she has her dress allowance, she says, "Of course, if you want me to walk about without gloves, you should say so." As your "saying so" would mean a row, you suggest that one dollar could not be better spent than on gloves, and you mark off your dollar like the iron cable in the English Admiralty report "Eaten by rats."

But supposing your wife asks for five dollars, and, it not being convenient to give her more than \$2.50, you again ask her for a list of the "things which are required for the house." If you get it, you will find that more

than half the items are not pressing, and so you give her \$2.50, and tell her she must make it go as far as she can. The next day she asks you for the other \$2.50. To make a long story short, you will find that she has bought all the "things" which were not



I have bought enough Soap to stock the White House.

pressing, and that she has left unpurchased all the things that were. Among the former are half a dozen boxes of S—— soap, and when you emphasize *half a dozen*, she says, "We cannot have the house without a bit of soap." Oh! that S—— soap! They give a coupon with each box, and for so many cou-

28 *The Domestic Blunders of Women*

pons they give the children a set of brown-paper toys. I live in a \$400 a year house, and I have bought enough saucepans—what is the attraction about saucepans?—and S—— soap to stock the White House.

It might be going a little too far to say women are absolutely dishonest about money; but it is not going a bit too far to say that they have no idea how hard it is to earn, that they have no idea of its value, that they cannot save it, that they have not the remotest notion how to spend it properly, and that, therefore, they should not be entrusted with either its saving or its spending.

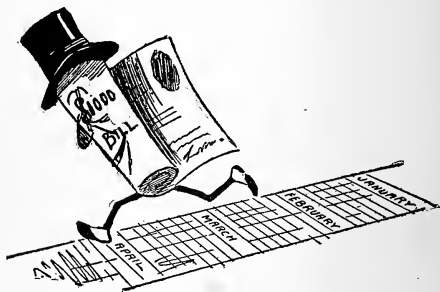
The real fact is, girls are not brought up either to have or to do without money. They cannot estimate the value of anything—not even their own clothes. They cannot keep accounts of money, and are really as much afraid of it as they are of a loaded pistol. It seems like a mere paradox to say women are afraid of money, but their acts suggest this, for their natural inclination seems to be to empty their purses, and a woman is never so happy as when she is

spending money, not necessarily on articles she wants, or even on herself. She will buy anything, lend or give away any sum, as long as she can get rid of money. There are women who would not run into debt for worlds, who would not part with any of their possessions, but who will get anything for themselves, or give anything away to their acquaintances, so long as they can get rid of actual money which they have in their pockets; and nothing is so common as to hear a woman say: "I thought I might as well buy so-and-so, as I had the money in my pocket."

Women are divided into two classes: the woman who never pays for necessities, and the woman who never buys anything unless she can pay cash. From the financier's point of view, one system is as bad as the other. Women not only dissipate men's money, but they destroy their credit. I am talking, of course, of middle-class women, who marry middle-class men, who earn their living from week to week, month to month, or year to year. Every man of business is a man of

30 *The Domestic Blunders of Women*

credit. Tho, perhaps, only having \$500 in his bank, his bills for \$5,000 running over three, six, nine, and twelve months, are readily accepted and handed on as cash. In France, this system prevails even in the home. Owing to the fantastic finance of women, no such thing exists here, and the result is, a man has to keep money for "weekly



books," which would be much better employed in his business. The result is long credit and ruinous prices with shopkeepers, or a constant drain of ready money to the detriment of credit. Women will not understand this. I will explain.

When I was a bachelor, I seldom or never

paid cash. If I wanted clothes, or even wine or cigars, I sent out and ordered them. When the bill came in, I always paid something "on account." The result was, my credit was excellent; that is to say, my tradesmen always trusted me, and said of me, "He always pays"; and, besides this, I was never without money in my pocket, and if I were a bit short, nobody was frightened. Since then I have married. My wife has always insisted on paying her weekly bills regularly on Saturday. She said it was "her way." She considered it disreputable to run bills, and said that if she sent a check on account, people would think we could not pay, and would not trust us, and, worse than all, "would talk." So far, it has not mattered. But, supposing I suddenly wanted all the money I could lay hands on for a business speculation. Do you suppose for one moment that my wife's twenty years of paying the bills weekly would give us a fortnight's credit for a box of matches, or that our tradesmen would accept such a new departure as a small check on account? I

32 *The Domestic Blunders of Women*

say emphatically, "No." Having been paid weekly, they would immediately suspect that I was "broke," and, as sure as my name is what it is, I should receive a dozen or so District Court summonses.

Thanks, therefore, to my wife's system of maintaining our good name, we are not worth three months' credit, and my name might just as well as not have made a weekly appearance in the Commercial reports. The result is, that, whereas "my office" has the reputation of being good for hundreds, "my house," which is managed by my partner, is not good for a fifty-dollar note. A further result is, that if I did not keep fifty dollars a month out of my business, I might find I could not get a bit to eat, and would be "the talk" of an entire suburb.

It must be clear, therefore, that, since this absurd system of paying "ready money," and getting no discount, pervades the entire ranks of the middle-class, women are not only conniving at the robbery of their husbands, but are ruining their credit. I have already shown that no woman ever gets

a discount for ready money. It may be said that they do not know that they could. It would require very little common sense for them to find it out. They must know—they do know!—that their cooks get it on everything that goes into the kitchen, and that their nurses get it for the very milk that goes into their nurseries. If they only looked at their dressmaker's bills, they would see "A discount of 5 per cent. allowed for cash," stated in red letters. Yet it is to people who cannot put two and two together, who can not keep money, who do not know how to spend money, who keep no record of what they receive, and have no knowledge of what anything should, or has, cost, to whom we entrust the finances of our homes. Are we not bigger fools, and more to blame, than they are?



CHAPTER IV

THE MANAGEMENT OF SERVANTS



Y one idea in this book is to be strictly fair to women, and not, as so many other writers have done, to attack them unfairly on subjects of vanity, dress, extravagance, or any of the other well-worn topics. To

have followed in the lines of my predecessors would, to my mind, have been to prove my own weakness, for we cannot change a woman's nature any more than we can man's and, therefore, to at-

tack women because they are fickle or vain-glorious seems to me as absurd as to attempt to prove that man is not the superior animal because he is, by instinct, fond of cakes and ale. Really, I do not want to attack at all, because it is as natural to me to be fond of women as it is for children to be fond of toys. My real idea is to give women an opportunity for defense, and to prove their strength. It is for this reason that I attack them where they elect to be considered strongest, namely, in their homes. The cry of late years is that women are as good as men, that they have been persecuted and kept under for years, and that, therefore, they should not be expected, in the first years of their emancipation, to be up to competing with men as bread-winners. That is quite reasonable, and, therefore, I do not gird at their mismanagement of the political and commercial sides of life.

But the management of the house they have always had, and, as I have said, there they fail sadly either to provide comfort, or to spend money in the proper way.

36 *The Domestic Blunders of Women*

I have, so far, shown that the discomforts and extravagances of home are largely due to woman's incapacity to buy in the best markets, and their inability to handle money to the best advantage. I am bound to admit



The serpent on the hearth.

that another great factor in home discomfort is the servants. Nearly all controversies hint at servants being the difficulty, and, needless to say, if I knew my subject at all, I was bound to face the servant question. I will

face it, but I fear that, so far from the cause of woman benefiting by the inquiry, I shall hereby prove my allegations against women more conclusively than I have so far done.

Woman's mission is to always put the blame on someone else. Eve began it. She put the blame on the serpent, and her daughters have ever since blamed the serpent on the hearth—the servant. Do not run away with any idea that I am going, for mere love of paradox, to champion servants. A French writer has said, "So many servants, so many spies," and, in my mind, servants are many things worse than spies. But let servants be, as they are, woman's excuse for everything that goes wrong, just as servants put everything on the cat. I accept the gage. For the purposes of argument, we will admit that servants are at the bottom of all the evils of home life. Now let us inquire into that. The first question to ask the woman in the box, who is giving evidence for the defense, is:

"Who engages the servants?"

The answer is "I do." The witness, be it

38 *The Domestic Blunders of Women*

understood, is speaking on behalf of women generally. The next question is:

“Who directs the servants?”



“Who engages the servants?”

The answer is the same, “I do.” Pursuing this line, I ask the mistress:

“From whom do your servants learn their business?”

"From me!"

"And anything they don't know, I may take it, is due to the fact that former mistresses have not taught, or have failed to teach, them?"

"That is so."

"You have heard the expression, 'Like master, like man,' have you not?"

"I have!"

"Have husbands nothing to do with teaching servants their business?"

"Certainly not!"

"What is the proportion of women-servants in a house where two men-servants are kept?"

"Five or six."

"And when the servants are all of one sex, to which sex do they belong?"

"Generally to the female sex."

"Then the proportion of women-servants over men-servants is very large?"

"It is."

"Then, if the entire education, engaging, paying, managing and discharging of servants is carried on by women, and if the pro-

40 *The Domestic Blunders of Women*

portion of women over men-servants is very large, the entire blame for the unsatisfactory state of the servant question must be due to women? ”

The witness does not answer, and, on being pressed, bursts into tears, and finally says :

“ It is all the fault of the men ! ”

I have put this point in the shape of a dialogue, because it is, perhaps, a little shorter and easier to understand. It all amounts to the old saying : “ *Qui facit per alium, facit per se !* ”

Men, as a rule, have nothing to do with servants, the larger proportion of servants are women, and, therefore, the faults of servants is only another proof that women are incapable of managing another very large section of a necessity which should go to make comfort and economy in the home. But perhaps it is not fair to judge entirely by majorities. Let us look at the exception, which again proves the rule. Bachelors keep their servants, men or women, for years, and,

with a few exceptions, always speak of them as treasures. Why is this?

Ask any servant who applies to you for a situation why he or she left his or her last place. The almost invariable answer is: "I could not get on with the mistress." Ask why any gentleman's gentleman, or my lady's maid, left his or her other place, and



In one of her tantrums.

the answers are always, "The missus, the missus, the missus." As a rule, when a servant gives notice, and is asked by his master why he wishes to leave, the answer is: "I can't satisfy my mistress, sir," or "I can't get on with the cook." Servants very seldom complain that they cannot get on

42 *The Domestic Blunders of Women*

with "the master." It is always "the missus." Again I ask—why is this?

The most unsatisfactory and sulky female servant will always smile and do anything cheerfully for her master, or the young gentlemen of the house, and when she is in one of her tantrums, it is, in nine cases out of ten, because she cannot get on with the missus, or the young ladies, or the other female servants—for the complaint of servants is always against what they call "She." "She" is the terror of the servant of either sex, and where there is dissension downstairs, the female servant is always at the bottom of it. Does not all this show that mistresses cannot manage servants, and that female servants cannot manage one another?

The servants of a house cost as much, as a rule, as the rent and taxes, and yet they never give satisfaction, and are never satisfied. Why is this? I could easily find fifty reasons to account for it. The mistress who overworks, the mistress who underworks, the mistress who is unkind, the mistress who is too kind, the mistress who is too strict, the

mistress who is not strict enough, the mistress who makes favorites, etc., etc., would all prove fruitful subjects to enlarge upon, were they not too obvious. The remarkable thing about the whole question is, that



The mistress who is overkind.

tho money will secure you everything on the earth, no amount of wages will induce servants, as a rule, to stop long in a place. It is a mistake to imagine that servants are independent and love to roam. As a matter of fact, they are terrified to leave, because

44 *The Domestic Blunders of Women*

they never know what character a spiteful mistress may give them, and one bad character means the street. It is the haunting fear of this which makes them, if possible, give notice, before they receive it, for this is their only protection. Is it natural to suppose that any friendless, and homeless, and moneyless creature willingly leaves a good roof, good food, and good wages, to run the chance of meeting a worse mistress? The thing is absurd, for the motto of servants is the not very lofty one of Gervaise:

“To have enough to eat and drink, to work all their lives, to die in their beds, and be buried decently.”

When I was a little fellow, I heard a servant say that the fate of a servant was:

“To work while you are young, to beg when you are old, and to go to the devil when you die.”

I have never forgotten it.

There is very much to be said on the subject of mistresses and servants—very much more than I have either space or patience for, and there would be very little use in saying

it if I had, as it seems all very obvious when you come to think of it, which women apparently never do. But this fact remains. We are as much indebted to servants for the comforts of home life as we are to our wives and daughters. The only difference between the two classes is that some of us are allowed to try and manage our wives and daughters, and some of us succeed, but none of us are ever allowed "to interfere with the servants"; all wives and daughters mismanage them, to our sore discomfort and their own; another thing is that we can get rid of our servants, but not of our wives and daughters, who, I candidly believe, are really the most to blame, tho, poor souls, I do believe most of them try.

The fact remains however, that women arrogate to themselves the management of servants, and prove their incapacity for the task by the deplorable state of the servant market. Men manage shop-girls, waitresses, factory girls, and all sorts of women engaged in their businesses; but men cannot stop at home to manage servants, and if they could,

they could not prevent their wives and daughters from interfering. The question is: What is to be done so that we may live in peace when our day's work is done?

It looks like an *impassè*, but it is not. The larger proportion of servants are women, therefore it is women we have to deal with. The real remedy is to promptly sack all your women-servants, and engage men only. Men-servants will cook, make beds, sweep, and wait at table. Why should they not do so for families? They do it in hotels, especially in France, in restaurants, and in the army. Women apparently cannot, or will not, learn, and women appear to be unable to teach them. Men can teach themselves to cook in a very short time, and all the rest is child's play. Yes, the solution of the servant question is to get rid of your women-servants, engage men, and make them entirely answerable to yourselves. Men-servants will cost a little more, but one man can do two women's work. Chinamen make capital servants; so do Hindoos. Why not Europeans or Americans? Ask any

Anglo-Indian or his wife what is the one cause of discord in the otherwise happy home, surrounded and served by men, and you will be told that there never was any trouble, except with the *ayah*. If you ask them what is an *ayah*, they will tell you an *ayah* is the one woman-servant in an Indian house, and that she is not an angel.



Why not a European or an American.

CHAPTER V

THE MISTAKES OF "THE MISSUS"

It will be in the minds of all my readers that I opened up the question of Servants and Mistresses by showing that, whatever faults servants have, women are responsible for them. That, I admit, was an impeachment of "The Missus." I admitted, however, that servants were far from blameless. I shall endeavor to develop this side of the question, and point out some further faults of the servant system, and suggest some remedies.

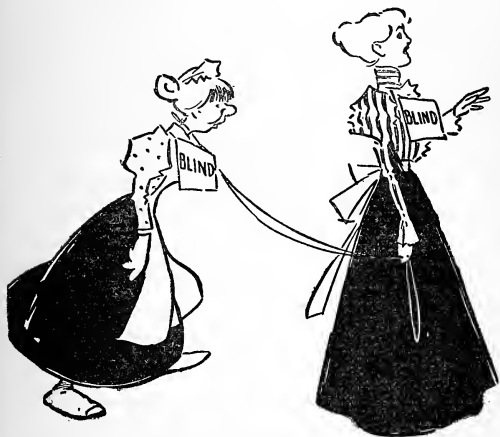
I showed that servants are what their mistresses make them. Let us see why mistresses make bad servants. To do this, we must get back to the purely business side of life. Here women are again at fault. In every business in the world which is managed by men, and where novices are employed, they are taken as apprentices and are taught their

trade. It is owing to the lax way in which women do their work that all servants are more or less amateurs, in the sense that they are incompetent, or, at least, not qualified. I do not suppose that there is a single servant in your employ, fair reader, who could tell you how she acquired the rudiments, to say nothing of the *finesse*, of her trade. If she comes to you as a cook, you will find that, in nine cases out of ten, she commenced as a kitchen-maid, and has only picked up cooking, as Pope says the apothecaries learn medicine, from making up prescriptions, and by experimenting on her unfortunate employers. It is just the same with maids and housemaids and housekeepers and the generality of nurses. Nobody but a woman would set about earning a living in such a way, and nobody but a woman would ever give her a chance. In this, as in most other things, you see the unsuitability of women to manage the little corners of the world which they are pleased to call their "own domain." How is it possible for mistresses who have never learnt to manage a house or

to distribute money to the greatest advantage, and servants who have never really learned their duties, to get on together or to cater for the comforts of man?

The result is, almost invariably, the disaster which follows the blind leading, or driving, the blind. It may be said that I am not quite fair in judging mistresses entirely from the point of view of professional men. Let me, therefore, take another example, which is rather of the accidental order of profession, and has to do with the lighter side of life. Take a man whom fortune, or misfortune, makes a theatrical manager. To be successful he must acquire a knowledge of many things. He has to learn something of literature, something of music, something of painting, something of dresses, something of carpentry, mechanics, finance, acting, and many other things, and not only learn them in a general way, but must know exactly how much every little item costs, the price of canvas, nails, wood, glue, needles, silk, printing, etc., etc. That all managers know all these things I am not prepared to admit, but

it is quite clear that the man who does not know them invariably fails in the long run, even though he is prepared to employ people who do. I mention this because many



The blind leading the blind.

women attribute the success of masters, not to their business ability, but to their ability to employ good servants.

This is only an illustration. Let us get back to the subject itself. Why do women

fail as employers of labor? First, because they do not know; secondly, because they are too lazy to learn. Women have succeeded, of course, but only where they are thrown on their own resources. As long as



Why do women fail.

men are content to become, so to speak, merely "backers," that is to say, people who provide money to keep up a fad which they call "Home," so long will women let things drift along without taking the trouble to make "Home" a good investment. By this

I am forced to explain that I do not mean a good investment from the point of absolutely increasing the revenue, but a good investment from the same point of view that a grouse-moor, or a piece of good fishing, may be a good investment, namely, something that provides a certain amount of pleasure and relaxation. You may pay \$400 for a billiard table, and never make anything out of it. But if it is a good billiard table you may get a large amount of amusement out of it, and so regard it as a very good investment.

The absolute chaotic state of the servant question is due to generations of women who have let things slide. The sooner they return to first principles the better. What are these principles? Go and see how your father, your brother, or your husband manages his business. You will find that it is on precisely the same principles that men have managed their business for generations. Why is domestic service the only profession or trade in the world which is overstocked and detested? Simply because it is the only

54 *The Domestic Blunders of Women*

one over which women preside, and the only one which is villainously mismanaged, to the disadvantage of the mistress and the servant alike. The cause for this is not far to seek. Domestic service is the only labor in the world where the duties and obligations of the employee and employer are not definitely defined. The result is constant friction.

There is but one remedy. There should be the written or printed agreement, which exists in all other paths of business, between the mistress and the servant. I suppose that the first thing I shall be told is that no servant would sign such an agreement. With all respect, I join issue with this statement. If the agreement were not entirely one-sided, every servant in the world would be only too ready to sign it and abide by it. This is proved by the fact that, wherever a union of men or women is formed, the first demand is for definite rules and a definite agreement. An agreement, if properly drawn up, would be for mutual protection. It would shield the servant from being imposed upon, and from being thrown out at the mere whim of a

mistress in the tantrums. It would secure for the mistress that the work of her house was properly done, and protection from the neglect and destruction of her property. The present lax system breeds nothing but mistrust rather than confidence. This, as everyone must agree, is the root of dissension. As matters are at present managed, no servant knows exactly what her work is, and she never has any idea that good conduct and faithful service will result in any reward but the kick-out when she is getting to that age when it is not very easy to find a place.

If I were managing a house, and about to engage servants, I would require each person whom I employed to sign an agreement. In this document, of which the servant should have a counterpart, signed by myself, it would be set forth that, in the case of, say, a house-maid, she should properly clean, every day between the hours of so-and-so, certain rooms which would be allotted to her, and for which she would be responsible, and perform such other work as was reasonable and was agreed upon. I should also furnish

each servant with an inventory of such property as was in her charge, and when any article was broken or missing I should require her to report the matter at once, and, if the amount of damage was over and above a certain percentage of fair wear and tear, I should possess the right to deduct so much



Supposing that your cook got tipsy.

from her wages. On my side, I should pledge myself to employ, and pay her a certain wage for a certain time, the said wage to increase after certain dates if still in my employ. I should further insist on my right to mark her character with such offenses as

she might be guilty of from time to time, but which should be considered as atoned for after a certain period of good conduct, and I would pledge myself to substitute for that agreement a character which would correspond with the marking of the agreement at such time as she left my service. For instance, supposing that a cook got typsy. If she were a good servant, I should be inclined to look over the matter the first time, but I should insist on marking the agreement. This she would naturally agree to, as it would be to her interest to live down her offense by remaining sober for a year, at which time her sin would be considered as purged, and, if she chose to leave then, I should be bound to give her a character saying she had been in my service a year, that she was a good cook, and was clean, economical, honest and habitually sober.

Besides this, I should take stock every six months. This is usual in all businesses, and it is eminently desirable in the management of a house. Every mistress knows that when anything is missing it is said to have been

broken "a long time ago," and, unless some servant has left, it is impossible to discover who was the delinquent, more especially as nobody is responsible. Another thing which



There is nothing in the kitchen.

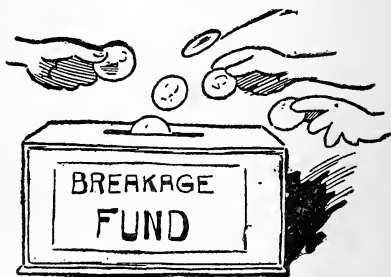
is in the experience of all housewives is that there is such a thing as wilful destruction, or what appears to be remarkably like it. The knowledge of this only comes when you engage a new servant. The morning after her arrival she invariably reports, if she is a

cook, that "there is nothing in the kitchen," and pots and pans, and everything appertaining to kitchen utensils, have to be replaced. If it is a housemaid, she demonstrates that there are no brushes, that the handle of the dust-pan is broken, that all the blacking is used up, and the dusters are a mass of holes. If it is a parlor-maid, there are no cups, tumblers, or glass-cloths, and she says she finds all the table-cloths and napkins are in a very bad way. Whenever this happens, the mistress always says the last servant "has stolen the things." How true this may be I do not know, but the knowledge comes too late. I have often heard my wife declare that the wilful damage in our house comes to quite \$100 a year, and many of her friends aver that this is a very small average.

I do not depart from my original statement that the real fault of all the discomfort and extravagance of "Home" life is due to "the Missus," but I hope I have shown that my eyes are quite open to the servant's share in it. Servants, however, I think, cannot be

60 *The Domestic Blunders of Women*

expected to take much pride where they have no responsibility, and no reward for looking after interests which are not their own. A system which exists in no other branch of life, and which is eminently unsatisfactory where it flourishes, must be in need of some remedy. I make the suggestion modestly, but I am deeply interested in its reception, and I trust mistresses and servants alike will give it consideration. That things are in a very bad state nobody can deny. The question is, can we arrive at a solution?



CHAPTER VI

THE HIGHLY RESPECTABLE PERSON



HILE these
chapters
were a p-
pearing in
serial form

I received a large number of letters, some of which will be found in this book. Among these is one which I feel I must mention, as it has made me pause and consider carefully whether I should continue this series, or drop the whole subject, and let the world continue in the same haphazard way that women have reduced it to. The letter runs as follows:

“I wish when you wrote that article about women that you (*sic*), someone, had stran-

gled you; you have made my life a burden to me (through my husband), what with your harness and your bran-mash, etc., and your mutton chops, and so on. There are no words in the English language bad enough that I could throw at you; please close your series at once, as they won't do good at all, and are only making strife in once peaceful homes."

This is signed "An Angry Wife," and I spare my readers the "P. S." It would be easy to sneer at this blotted and illiterate letter; but I am not so hard-hearted as some of my readers may imagine, and I can see that this badly-written letter is stained with tears. There is even a pathos for me in the vulgarity of the postscript, and I am deeply sorry if any words of mine have led some foolish man to apply them too near home for his own and his wife's comfort. My mission is not to make discord, but to preach peace. I want to show women where they fail, so that they may mend their manners, and, if they will only take heed, and their husbands

will only be a little patient with them, though there may be little storms, I am sure the sunshine will succeed.

With these few words, and in this hope, I continue, and I take for my subject women's idea of a good servant, or, at least, their idea



She will not die.

of a servant they ought to put up with. She is common to all homes, and I am sure all my readers will recognize her under the title of "Such a highly respectable person!"

Was it Sidney Smith—or was it Charles Lamb?—who said there were three sexes—men, women, and parsons? It is I who say

that "the highly respectable person" is a distinct breed of biped, which Hobb would have gloried in. She is common to all nations. She is a cross between a chameleon and Proteus. She is sometimes English, sometimes Scotch, sometimes Irish, and sometimes American; but she is not human, for she has no vices, and she apparently was never born, for nobody ever knew "the highly respectable person" when she was young. She came (from where it would not be polite to say) into the world when she was middle-aged, and, like H. S. Leigh's famous parrot,

"She'd look beautiful if stuffed,
And knows it, but she will not die."

As I have said, "the highly respectable person" is possessed of all the virtues. Among these, she is "very willing." If she is employed as nurse, and the cook gets temporarily indisposed, she does not mind going into the kitchen, and doing her best, and you can always rely upon having a dinner served an hour late, which is either half or three times too much cooked. She cheerfully

washes up such of the dishes and plates as she has not broken, and cleans those knives that scalding water has left handles on. At the end of her week's reign in the lower regions, you discover that the boiler is burned through, and the sink is stopped up. If she comes to you as cook, when you are short-handed, she does not mind doing her best upstairs; she never forgets to mend any china which "comes apart" in her hand, and you can always tell, by the smell and the stains, that she has not forgotten to fill the lamps.

She is a very tidy person. She always carefully puts away anything you want, and you see, by the way your papers are turned over, that your desk has been thoroughly dusted—round the edges. And she is handy withal. If the chair is broken, you will not find it out at once, as she will make it hold together—till you sit down—by tying it with string, or driving a tenpenny nail through the back, which is "so brittle and old" that it splits. If she has any washing to do, she makes no fuss about it. She waits

till you are out, and does it in the bath-room, and when the waste won't act, and the plumber comes and pulls up half the floor, and the force-pipe smothers the ceiling with semi-decayed soap and dirt, you can satisfy yourself that the mischief was as much due to the fluff and hair which *somebody* put in the bath as the fact that "the highly respectable person" forgot that hot water will melt a bar of soap in time if allowed to stand.

But this is only indoors. If a slate is blown off the house, "the highly respectable person" will clamber up through the trap-door, and march about without fear of slipping with her thick boots on the roof, and when she comes down you will know exactly how many slates are broken. If you send her to the butcher's, you may be sure she will pick the meat she thinks is best for you, and if you happen not to like it as much as usual, you will at least know that she did her best in your interests, by finding that she has saved you a quarter. If her mistress wants a certain kind of stuff, and sends her for it, she will never come back empty-

handed. If the storekeeper has not the right material or color, she will bring back the next best thing to it, and if you are so particular as to object to mixing satin and silk, or pink and magenta, why, the shopkeeper will generally allow you to "take it out" in something he has got, and you don't want, say, in six dozen of glass cloths, or something useful, which are sure to come in handy in a year or two.

But what "the highly respectable person" is most careful of, is "Master's things." She always knows where his socks can be bought cheaper than he can buy them for himself, and she has endless suggestions as to what to do with his clothes, or ties and scarfs, which he so foolishly treasures above much newer fashions and colors which can be picked up at sales.

It is needless to say that such a clever, useful person, who is so careful of the interests of her master and mistress, is not adored by the other servants. They of course, not being "highly respectable persons," have to be carefully watched. Their letters have to be

68 *The Domestic Blunders of Women*

carefully scrutinized, and, if possible, read. Their conversations at the kitchen door with the milkman, or baker, and at the hall door with the postman, are duly noted; their man-



At the door with the milkman noted.

ner of addressing one another, and any words which they may drop have a terrible significance when reported at appropriate moments, and, that they are very foolish persons, is

proved by their objecting to be interfered with on every point, and by allowing themselves to be exasperated into telling "the highly respectable person" to mind her own business. That such a state of open revolt should be allowed to continue is, of course, impossible. Having awakened to the fact that "the highly respectable person" is trusted and honored in the eyes of her nominal mistress, the rest of the servants, fearing a month's notice and a bad character, take the unfair advantage of protecting themselves, and give warning. It is thus that "the highly respectable person" prevents her master and mistress from being served by bad servants, for everyone must admit that it is much better not to be served at all, than by bad servants.

But the greatest of all the qualities of "the highly respectable person" is the fact that she is a dragon of virtue. She has no followers that anybody ever saw or heard of. Nobody calls and asks to see her; she receives no letters that are not in an unmistakable feminine hand; nobody hangs about the

gate and whistles, and nobody has ever been seen to raise his hat to her, look after her, or pass her the time of day, in going by. Perhaps, however, an even greater quality is that she wants no Sundays or week-days out, except to go to church, and, altho she is strictly religious, she sets her duty above all things, and never demands her right when she thinks it would be in any way inconvenient to her mistress.

Her mission in life is to stick to her mistress as long as her mistress will stick to her. To do this thoroughly, she has to read her mistress's letters, and woe betide the mistress who, not being all that she might be, attempts to part with "the highly respectable person," for "the highly respectable person" is as solicitous of the welfare of her mistress as she is of her fellow-servants. To attain this end, she is careful to keep her mistress up to her mark. In the present deplorable state to which generations of women have brought the Servant Market, the mistress is bound, if not to shut her eyes, at any rate, not to look too closely for faults. But

this laxity does not suit "the highly respectable person." Her motto is, "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth," and "the highly respectable person" has aggregated to



She has to read her mistress's letters.

herself the *rôle* of social blister. She tells her mistress all she does not wish to know, but, knowing, must notice. She instructs her when the sieves were not scalded, when

the pots are not cleaned, when the bread-pan has been allowed to grow over-full, where half a pound of butter has been put away and forgotten, and she leads her round the house to point out where the dusting has been scamped, and turns up the rugs and carpets where yesterday's dust has been hastily hidden. In this way she fans her mistress into perpetual warfare with her servants, and poses, with virtuous pride, as "a highly respectable person" is entitled to pose, as being careful of the welfare and rectitude of her fellow-creatures.

Men, who are unreasonable, and know nothing of what is good for them, as opposed to the luxury of peace and quiet, are no respecters of servants who are "highly respectable," and act as firebrands. They advocate the casting out of the one "highly respectable person," and the keeping of the majority, who are merely human beings, who have "followers," and who want to go out regularly, as they are entitled to do, and they care little how servants behave when they are away from home. These are the

lines upon which men conduct their businesses, and this is possibly why their managers, their clerks, and other employees remain for years in their service and work together in harmony. Women are always crying out against their servants. Does any lady or gentleman want a "highly respectable person" with all the above advantages? I know one, at least, whom I shall be only too pleased to recommend to any master or mistress who has not experienced such a luxury, and I promise to ask no questions. If my readers know of any more, I shall be glad if they will write. Don't all speak at once.



Don't all speak at once.

CHAPTER VII

THE DOMESTIC INFERNO



AS the nursery upstairs is generally admitted to be the heaven of our homes, so the kitchen ably takes up the position of—the other place. It is there that all the mischief of the house is hatched, and I must say I think the mistress of the house is largely responsible for its sins. On the few occasions when a man visits it (for instance, when he comes back late, and finds the servants have forgotten to lay any bread, or the fire has gone out, and some sticks are wanted), he is, as a rule, absolutely appalled at its dirt and disorder.

It is true that the stove may be bright, and that the dresser may look very clean with its rows of plates, but if he has to look deeper, what a perfect rag-and-bone shop the whole place is! Only let him peep into the cupboards, only let him open the drawer of the kitchen table, or the dresser, and he will be perfectly horrified to find that his wife allows such a mass of heterogeneous matter to be collected. I will spare my readers a picture of it—let them go and see for themselves. There is only one question I should like to have answered, and that is: Why is it that the drawers in a dresser never have any handles? I am not merely trying to provide the followers of Vilon with a refrain for a *ballade*. I ask in the interest of our best knives, our forks, and skewers, that break and twist themselves out of all shape in their efforts to open the drawers of dressers.

I do not think I am overstating it when I say that if wives would only keep handles on the drawers of their dresser, they would save their husbands fifty dollars a

year, which, during twenty years of married life, amounts to \$1000.

This brings me to the appalling misuse which all the articles in the kitchen are put to. Every trade has its list of necessary tools, and everyone knows that there is not a mechanic in the world who requires to be so fully supplied with plant as a cook, and that there is no skilled workman who puts it to such bad use. With a trowel and a mortar-board, a bricklayer will build a house—indeed, several houses; with a few chisels and a hammer, a stonemason will decorate the side of a cathedral, and perhaps the carpenter is the only skilled laborer who requires anything like so much plant as a cook. She is never happy, and always ready with a string of excuses, till she is provided with a whole houseful of things, which she declares are absolutely essential to the cooking of exceedingly plain fare.

She must have rows of saucepans, ranging from the very biggest to the very smallest, and everything else in proportion, and as soon as she is provided with them, her

fancy settles upon particular saucepans and pans, which she keeps in constant use till they are destroyed. Every man knows that five pairs of boots or five suits of clothes will last longer by being worn alternately than by being hacked out separately; but the mistress never insists upon this system being applied to kitchen utensils. No cook will be



happy till she is provided with a meat chopper and a meat saw, but when she has got them, she prefers to use the best carvers. Whoever heard of a carpenter turning screws with his chisel, or using his pincers to drive nails with?

This will probably send my strong-minded readers into hysterics, but can they deny that cooks persistently use one spot in a sieve till they have rubbed a hole in it, and that generally a cook will devote the first thing which comes to her hand to a use for which it was

78 *The Domestic Blunders of Women*

never intended, and that this system leads to great damage? If they do, I should like to ask them to account for the number of knives which are broken, and to ask them if they ever in their lives saw a knife broken by proper use in the dining-room? It stands to reason, first, that I cannot go through the misuses which every article in the kitchen is put to—such should not be necessary, and is certainly impossible in the space which I mean this book to occupy; and secondly, that as “A Mere Man,” away all day at my business, I could not possibly be expected to know; but most sensible women must admit, if they think over it carefully, that the annual renewals of a kitchen are out of all proportion.

This being so, how should it be dealt with? Well, most men of business set aside a certain amount of their incomes for what we call, on our balance-sheets, depreciation of plant. I wonder how many women there are who make any such provision in their own particular business, Home? I wonder if there is one single one who is long-headed

enough to have ever thought of such a thing, and I wonder how many there are who have ever dreamed of a yearly or half-yearly "stock-taking"?

Do you know, my fair readers, that yours is the only business in the world which is not conducted on these principles, and do you know that yours are the only servants in the world who object to be charged with deficiencies over and above a certain reasonable amount? Do you know that where servants are employed in similar pursuits by men—I refer more particularly now to waiters and barmaids, etc.—that there is such a thing as a breakage fund, to which all subscribe willingly, and that any surplus is devoted to the benefit of all concerned? Now, do you not think it would be well if you established such a system? Do you not think it would make your servants more careful, and you much richer? I am sure you do, and, this being so, I counsel all housekeepers to put it in practice.

But I must get on to even a more important subject of waste than this. There is,

perhaps no more serious expense in a household than coal. It behoves you to be most careful of its consumption. To do you justice, in many ways you are. You will regulate exactly the amount of coal you use upstairs. You put off having fires for your own comfort as long as you can, and you economize by persuading your family to make one fire do for as many as possible. This shows you are not blind to the terrible expense of coal. But I fear me that, while you are sparing at one end, you are spending at the other.

But there are ways to save coal; that is to say, there is a way to prevent it being wasted. In most middle-class houses, the kitchen has to provide breakfast, middle-day dinner or luncheon, a cup of tea at five o'clock, and dinner. To do this, it is necessary, according to the cook, to keep up a roaring furnace, that would roast an ox or melt enough iron to make a good-sized gun, from half-past six in the morning to close on ten o'clock at night—fifteen and a-half hours. There is no good in going into any elaborate

explanations as to how to avoid this. Everybody knows as well as I do—but no



Look at your bill for coal.

woman takes the trouble to see that the cook really slacks down her fire. Of course,

everybody will jump to the front, and say she and every other mistress does see to the kitchen fire, but equally, of course, they do nothing of the kind. If you don't believe me, take down your own file, and look at your own year's bill for coal. As a matter of fact, your cook ought not to burn more coal in winter than in summer. As a rule, she burns three times as much. Some cooks are clever enough to hide this by making up the surplus from the better coal. Nothing, however, alters the fact that the real practical cooking of a house—in which I do not include making a cup of tea—does not begin till near mid-day* and is over by 6:30 at latest. In other words a really good fire is required for about four hours, yet the sparks fly upwards for some sixteen hours.

I expect that I shall have plenty of people writing to say they have tried gas, and found it was no saving at all, as they burned just as much coal as ever. With these persons I quite agree. In fact, I will go further; I

* It is a growing custom to have for breakfast a cup of coffee and rolls.

should not be surprised to find that it proved infinitely more expensive, because, of course, if you still keep a fire burning from 6.30 a. m. to 10 p. m., and gas besides, there is not much chance for economy to come in.

There is much more to be said about women's sins in the direction of the kitchen, but they belong more particularly to the larder, and I will treat of them under that head. There is no good in taking too many things together.



CHAPTER VIII

THE BOTTOMLESS PIT.



SINCE writing my last chapter, and thinking out my present one, I went up to our Free Library, and got out the Slang Dictionary. I was anxious to find out why the abode of thieves is called a *Thieves' Kitchen*. I could not discover any reference to it, and I have not been able to make out what led to the Infernal regions being placed by popular assent under our feet. The appropriateness of the superstition seems to have been too obvious for anyone to bother inquiring into.

The basement has as many departments as Dante's Inferno. We have looked into the kitchen and the coal hole, and found them pretty bad. But there is one place where the

mistress of a house wastes less time and more money than in either. It is a popular delusion that every woman regularly visits her larder. In a large country-house, where it is roomy and light, she does in the summer, because it is cooler than the kitchen. But a comparatively small number of middle-class women live in large country-houses, and, as a rule, in towns and small houses, the larder is a dark cupboard under the stairs, and a housekeeper generally has to take the cook's word for its contents. But, however all this may be, even all those who visit it regularly, and take a candle with them, do so at entirely the wrong time, as I mean to show later on.

The upstairs meals, as a rule, consist of breakfast, lunch, and dinner, where there is a late dinner. I do not know how many women are aware of the fact, but I am sure not one man in a thousand knows that his servants have just double that number of meals. The very first thing which every servant in the world does—long before you are called—is to make herself tea. This is followed by the necessary breakfast, and

86 *The Domestic Blunders of Women*

scarcely has the mistress left her kitchen, after giving her orders, than every servant lays aside his or her work, and proceeds to partake of a meal which takes its name from the hour at which it is held. "Elevens," for such it is called, consists of a hurried snack, at which the domestic locusts devour all they can lay hands on. Under ordinary circumstances, it would not be necessary to say that a meal could not take place unless there was something to eat. This however, does not seem to have struck the women of the last eighteen hundred and ninety-eight years. "Elevens" are not calculated for by mistresses, but they are provided for by the chief brigand—the cook. How is this done so that the mistress will not miss the food? Simply by abstracting it from the larder before the mistress makes her inspection.

Most of the wasteful over-eating and pilfering of servants is due to giving the cook discretion as to what the domestics shall have for their supper. Everything in the way of food that disappears is accounted for by saying, "The servants had it for their

supper," and there is no going behind it. I admit this evil is a very difficult one to cope with, and I will state the other side. Where the rigid law of bread and cheese for the servants' supper exists, great expense and waste ensue. Servants like nothing better than to eat themselves as nearly sick as possible, and the servant who eats a quarter of a pound of cheese and a half a loaf of bread, every night, to say nothing of ends of butter, costs something, I can tell you, more especially as you get no credit for the pieces of steak, odd cutlets, ends of pudding, and scraps generally, which become the cook's perquisites, and when she cannot dispose of them in this way are allowed to go bad, or deliberately thrown upon the kitchen fire and burned. The generally-disorganized state to which the kitchen and larder have been allowed to come is so appalling that one hardly knows what to tackle first.

In a business managed by men, say a shoemaker's, if a servant were caught systematically carrying out ends of leather, wax, hemp, nails, etc., he would be handed

88 *The Domestic Blunders of Women*

over to a policeman, and would get six months' hard labor; but, owing to the absolutely unbusiness-like way in which women manage their servants, the cook claims "perquisites" as her right, and disposes of buckets full of good food for cash, the butler bags the bottles, etc., the housemaid the candle-ends, medicine bottles, soap, etc., and she and the lady's maid, like the butler and footman, divide the clothes. I cannot spare the space to more than hint at the wholesale robbery which goes on under the very eyes of women, who, all the time, are expected, and profess to be, looking after the comfort and economy of men. It is a hard word to use, but most women simply connive at the robbery of servants, and if the real facts ever dawn upon them, they console their consciences by saying, "Oh well, anything for a quiet life!" Apart from the upstairs peculations, is there a woman living who does not know—for there is no excuse for her not knowing—that "the weekly scrub" regularly carries off a mysterious bundle which she did not bring in, and that she is simply

a go-between for the thieves without and the thieves within?

To dismiss this painful subject, as I have said, the evils arising from "the servants' supper" are very difficult to solve. Of two evils, however choose the lesser. It is better economy to let the servants steal and eat the good food than that the ends of fish, poultry, and game, should be thrown upon the kitchen fire; but, whatever you do, on no account ever permit the existence of what is called "the swill pail." Once you allow such an institution, you set up for yourself a yawning abyss, which devours everything which the cook can steal from the servants and yourselves. "The swill pail" is the direct product of the false economy of daily marketing. If you market daily, the result is odd quantities of everything, all of which go into "the swill pail" and, as a matter of fact, there is nowhere else to put them, for it seems difficult to persuade Anglo Saxon women to persist on the setting up of a stock-pot, which is an institution in every French establishment. There ought not to be a

single house, or flat, however humble, where you ought not to be able to get, at five minutes' notice, a fine bowl of soup without expending one sixpence on gravy, beef, or vegetables. Into this should go every scrap of meat, fat, fowl, and all your spare gravy, your odd carrots, and half onions. Soup in this country is looked upon by women as an expensive luxury, instead of which it should be a staple dish in every humble home of the lower classes. But I have so much to say that I am drifting away again.

It is a popular fallacy amongst women that they must buy their vegetables fresh, and fresh every day, and this is their argument against purchasing large quantities, which would very much save their pockets. As a matter of fact, three-quarters of the vegetables used in a middle-class house are not, and do not, require to be fresh. Take for example, potatoes, turnips, carrots, onions, beetroots, celery for soup, leeks, cabbages and cauliflowers, etc., etc. You are not foolish enough, I hope, to suppose that your greengrocer digs, pulls, or cuts these

every day for your special edifications. If you do, think so no longer, and amend your ways. Even the last two, cabbages and cauliflowers, keep four or five days, and preserve whatever freshness they require much better in your cool, clean—you see, I am giving you all credit—larder than in a stuffy green-grocer's shop.

CHAPTER IX

CUPBOARD SKELETONS



IN my last chapter I was about to condemn the butcher to be, as his trade demands, "hung," drawn, and four-quartered, but I thought it best to start again fresh. The butcher, owing to his trade, is looked upon as a sanguinary scoundrel of the worst order. I never knew but one butcher at all intimately, and he was in a big way of business in the wholesale trade, but he told me this was the popular belief. He was very much down on authors who referred disrespectfully to butchers. He took this very much to heart, and went on to demonstrate to me that all the great men of the world had been, or had sprung from, butchers, even Shakespeare, and that he was perhaps the worst. I am sure nothing else would have made him read

Shakespeare, which, by the way, he knew very well, as far as the quotations about butchers went, at any rate. But there is an old superstition in favor of a man who breaks his rope being allowed to go free and repent, or hang *himself*, if he is anxious to die suddenly. I have no more space to spend on the butcher, and so to the next man in the tumbril.

This is the baker. I suppose it is on account of his white cap and apron, and the general flouriness of his appearance, that the baker is universally regarded as a bluff, honest fellow. He isn't! He is a thief also and he grows fat on his flour-bags, and rich on his rascalities. The baker is the direct product of the lax way in which women manage their business. He not only adulterates his bread with every deleterious matter he can lay his hands upon, but he has established it as a recognized custom of his trade—against which the law has no powers—that he is allowed to receive full money for short weight. The law says you shall have full weight if you demand it, but if you don't

specially stipulate that you require your five cent loaf or your penny roll to be worth half the money you pay for it, you must not expect it, nor complain.

But how many women, except those of the very poor class, do this? Not one in a thousand. In spite of this already heavy tax on your pockets, there is scarcely any article of

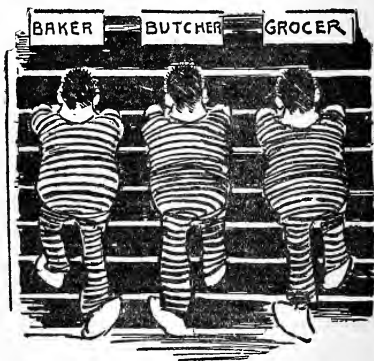


household use which is so wasted as bread. I do not deny that bread is a thing for which an absolutely fixed order cannot always be given. When you are "expecting people," you have to provide for them; some days an extra quantity is used in cooking, as, for instance, in crumbs, toast, puddings, etc. But, over and above this, there is far too great a margin which goes to waste. Every bread

pan in the land is half-full of crusts and ends of loaves, which are allowed to go to waste. They are allowed to get hard and are thrown, unless given, away. In this matter your most honest servant has no compunction. She, who will not steal a penny or let anyone else do so, will cheerfully give away pounds of meat and bread to every beggar who comes to the kitchen door, even if there were ten a day. This is not charity, for everyone knows, or ought to know, that beggars do not want bread, and only throw it over the first paling, or into the first garden they come across. It you don't believe me, have them watched, and see for yourself.

It may be agreed that the robberies of the baker cannot be laid at the door of the mistress. There is something in this, but, like most general statements—my own included—it is not quite, that is to say, entirely, true. The mistress is responsible for all that goes wrong, and the baker, as well as the butcher, is an incentive to the nefarious practice of perquisites. Every mistress who keeps her senses on the alert must know that

her baker's and her butcher's books contain items which never see the inside of her house, and that the cook calmly passes eight-pound joints to be charged as ten, and neglects to change loaves, so that she may receive her miserable commission, which is a direct incentive to robbery, for which tradesmen should get long terms of hard labor.



Ought to get terms of hard labor.

This brings me to an almost more important factor in the pilfering line. I refer to the grocer's book. I have already inveighed against the weekly book. Such private ar-

guments as I have had have not altered my views, and I will tell you why. Where a weekly book is kept—that is to say, where a weekly order is given—the cook always, designedly or otherwise, forgets something, generally a great many things, and, at the end of the week, you find these “had to be fetched in a hurry,” and your book is bigger than you expected. Another reason for extravagance is that, where a weekly order is given, the items in the store cupboard are few, and, as a result, the mistress does not keep it locked or give out the things as they are wanted. The result is that the cook makes a point of using up or wasting everything that it contains, and the mistress only thinks, when she sees the empty cupboard, how clever and economical she is not to have ordered too much. Take my advice, and take it quickly. At once institute a monthly order, see that everything is delivered, check it over as it is put in the store, and put the key in your pocket. This will save you a great deal of trouble, and a great deal of money, and you will find your table is better

furnished, and that you are living better for very much less money.

You may well ask, how can this be? In the first place, you can buy large quantities cheaper than you can small quantities. Secondly, your order being a larger and more important matter, you will do it more carefully, and will write it down. Thirdly, you may be induced to keep the list for reference, and you will see that what you have ordered is delivered, and that you get the benefit of what is over. You have no idea what a difference it will make till you try it. Your kindling wood, jam, raisins, rice, sugar, etc., may remain much the same after a few months, but you will find you will save on hundreds of boxes of matches—which were thrown on the fire—and that you always have in hand plenty of dessert, anchovies, sardines, spices, and all the etceteras which cost so much, and disappear so quickly, but which have to be in a house not so much for daily use as when required for an emergency.

I am always coming back, like a maker of *ballades*, to the same *refrain*. In all busi-

nesses managed by men, no order is given or accepted without a written check. If you want really to manage your house on anything like business principles, to save money, and have a good time, go round to a small local printer, and get him to make up for you—they will only cost you about three dollars—ten books, containing one hundred forms each, which you should fill up (as in *italics*) whenever you give an order, something like the following:

....., 1900

To.....

Kindly supply to

148 York avenue,
Westerleigh Heights.

.....

.....

.....

.....

NO CHARGE WILL BE RE-
COGNIZED UNLESS A
SIGNED ORDER CAN BE
PRODUCED.

March 1st, 1900.

To *J. Spriggins.*

Kindly supply to
148 York avenue,
Westerleigh Heights

*5 lbs. Best Candles,
6 lbs. Brown Sugar,
8 Bars Primrose Soap.
3 tins Blacking, etc.*

(Signed)



CHAPTER X

THE MANAGEMENT OF CHILDREN



I AM now going to offer some criticisms which I know will be resented far more than anything I have so far written, and my only hope is that what I

say will do some good.

I have shown that the whole system is wrong, that all the accepted ideas of management are grotesque, and that women have no idea how to save, or to spend, money, and that, therefore, they should not be entrusted with it. Having done this, and it having been admitted I have proved my case, let me hope women will profit by my advice, and mend their ways. But the management of

children is a more serious business, and, though I am sorry to say it, I am convinced that women are more ignorant of the management of their nurseries than of any other parts of their houses. Perhaps some statistically-inclined correspondent will kindly give us a statement of the annual mortality of children. Personally, I do not know it, but I believe it to be enormous, so enormous indeed as to be out of all proportion to any other death-rate known. Large as it may be proved to be, it will not surprise me half as much as that it is not twice as large, for I know of no children who do not surprise me when they survive the treatment which they receive from their fond but foolish mothers, and the servants to whose care they are left.

Is there any married woman living who can put her hand upon her heart and truthfully say that, when her first baby was born, she had the very slightest idea as to what ought to be done with it? Women have not the most elementary ideas as to how to take care of themselves. If this were a medical book, I could show that there is hardly a girl

living who, between the age of fifteen and her marriage, does not court her own death many times a year. But this is not a medical book and I will content myself by saying that most wives owe any health they may have to the persistent interference of their husbands. I am no advocate of what is wrongly called "rational" costume. This means, generally, giving up skirts, and nonsense of that kind. Neither am I going to run my head against the stone wall of corsets. Personally, I not only like girls to wear stays, but I believe they are a great support to women; but this does not mean that I advocate tight-lacing any more than I do tight boots. But is there any sane person who will argue that half a yard of cambric is a rational costume on a cold winter's day? I do not wish to pursue this subject further than to point out that it is to women, who have such extraordinary ideas of clothing themselves, that the costuming of children is left.

There are three things, I take it, which are material to the health of young children,

namely, warmth, air and exercise, and food. I do not think that there is one of them which women understand; but let us take them one at a time. I shall never forget being told by my wife, with tears, what a terrible thing it was that her first baby had got cold, and that that meant having a cold all the winter. This had been told to her by the nurse, for the nurse said the same thing when I went upstairs. I found the poor child crawling about the floor in a costume which is best described by saying that it was that of a *première danseuse*, only more scanty. From the waist downwards the child had nothing on but skirts a few inches long, and a pair of short cotton socks. I soon sent out for some yards of flannel, built the fire half-way up the chimney, kept the child in bed on hot drinks, and within a few days—despite what was called “such a terribly weakening treatment”—the child was quite well.

Despite “the marvelous way in which baby shook off the cold”—as the cure was called—the women fought hard to restore the inhuman garments from which I had

rescued it. I insisted on the poor little legs being kept swathed in flannel, and although I was told it was most terribly weakening, and was given every other mad reason for sacrificing the child to the convenience of the nurse, "the baby" remained so till he went into knickerbockers and long stockings, and to-day he is pretty sturdy on his pins in a football scrimmage. Now, don't let every woman write and say that children are not kept half-naked from the time they are six months old—for such is not the truth. They are; and that such a practice exists is nothing short of criminal negligence.

I don't mean to say that women mean to be cruel. I don't think they do. They simply don't think what they are doing and allowing to be done. If you suggested taking "the baby" out without its cap, to say nothing of stripping it to the waist, they would think you mad; but it never occurs to them that the exposure of the pit of the stomach to the winds of heaven is five times as dangerous. If these facts are true, and I shall be surprised if they can be combated, how can

women contend that they manage children better than men would? How can they contend that they have the very slightest idea of how to manage children at all?

But I do not wish to be too dogmatic. The absurd custom of stripping children half-naked, and being surprised and crying floods of tears when they die, must surely have some champions who can give some reason for what seems to most lay minds sheer cruelty or mere ignorance. If there be such, let them now speak up, to my undoing.

Everything a woman knows, or is supposed to know, she credits the rest of the world with being entirely ignorant of. This is my point. Why should women be the only persons who are believed to be able to take care of children? As a matter of fact, a woman, left to herself, generally nearly kills her child, and then rushes off to fetch the doctor—a man, mind you—to get her out of the awful mess which she has got herself into. I know I shall be attacked for even daring to touch upon the subject of children. The butcher, the baker, and the candlestick

maker, perhaps—but children! What can a man know of children? I can imagine every second woman in the land saying this. But the point we have to consider is—What do women know of children?

Now, it must be admitted that women have the entire management of children. What is the result? The plague of London hardly equaled the present infant mortality of London or New York. Why is this? Why do more children die every year than calves or lambs, or kittens, or puppies, or anything else? I don't say there is no reason. I want you to tell me, and prove to me, if you can, that it is for any other reason in the world except because they are managed by women. That's what I want to believe if I can, but, frankly, I don't believe it. I don't believe women have the very slightest idea how children should be taken care of. As I have said, all they want is proper food, reasonable clothing, and proper air and exercise. Given these things, they ought to as surely grow as seed that gets proper moisture and sunlight. As a rule, children are fairly

healthy, when they are born. If they were not, they would never survive the fearful trials of their birth. Subjected to the same treatment which children receive, all the kittens and puppies which are born would never open their eyes.

Most children survive being weaned. After that most of them are poisoned by their mothers and their nurses. What is the first motive to look for? What are women most fond of? Of all things, sweets. Women simply love sweets, and, in their usual irrational way, they give children sweets. I have said "give their children sweets." Why, they simply stuff them with sweets! There is nothing they do not give them sweets with. They sweeten their bottles, they sweeten their bread, they give them sweets when they are good, they give them sweets when they are naughty! Indeed, I do not know when it is they do not give them sweets. I remember asking one of my own children what she had had for dinner. The prompt answer was "Pudding!" I was at

first surprised at the apparent stupidity of an otherwise sharp child, and I said :

“ Yes, you had pudding *after* dinner, but what did you have for *dinner*? ”

“ Oh! you mean the beginning? ”

There you have it better than any grown person could put it. The child had simply been taught that pudding—which is simply an excuse for sugar—was dinner. The rest of her food was regarded as a sort of useless preliminary. The result is that most children die of sweets. Sweets simply ruin a healthy appetite, and are to children what drinking is to men.

Next to their mothers, the chief murderers of children are their nurses. Nothing is so pernicious as the custom of nursery meals. It simply means that as the nurse and the children have, more or less, to eat the same meals, the nurse takes jolly good care the children have what she likes, rather than what is good for them. If she dislikes fish, for instance, she says the children cannot eat fish. The mother not knowing, and the chil-

dren saying what they are told to say, they never have fish. It is the same with suet pudding or eggs, rice puddings, and all the rest of it. There is no good in saying this is not true, because it is human nature, and you can't go behind that. Then again, nurses love to feed children on what they themselves like. In their ignorant way, they think this is kind, and they are always feeding even the youngest children on meat. Far too much meat is given to children. They cannot digest it, more especially when their stomachs are destroyed by sweets and sips of beer and wine, and every other mess which women are never content unless baby has a taste of. As a rule, the diet of children would kill most men and women. From morning to night they are stuffed with food. Besides their regular meals, which are too big for their appetites, and not sufficiently frequent, they munch biscuits and cake and bread and butter, with layers of sugar or jam, from the time they get up till the time they go to bed, with the result that they have to be regularly physicked. Such violent

remedies would kill a horse, and, indeed, it is akin to the system by which light-weight jockeys are killed.

Women think they can feed children by instinct. That's how they kill them. They also imagine that all children have the same digestions, and the result is, you find a whole nursery-full of children all eating the same food, and all subjected to the same treatment. Could anything be more mad? Does it not stand to reason that if some grown-up people, whose digestions have survived the treatment of their youth, cannot eat the same food as other people, children require dieting too?

Some of the women I have spoken to on this subject have denied most things that others have admitted. They have said that men cannot manage their businesses, that men cannot manage their money, that men cannot manage their servants, and of all things, that they cannot manage women. It is only reasonable, therefore, to suppose that it will be denied that men can manage children. One thing is perfectly certain, and

that is, that women do not. But I will ask those who will want to scratch my eyes out how they account for the fact that men do manage children, and manage them very well—more especially girls. A complete list of the large institutions managed by men would be impossible, but surely I may cite such large schools as Smith's College and Vassar, which are not only managed, but magnificently managed, by men, many, if not most, of whom are bachelors, strange as it may seem.

I have already demonstrated that women have no idea how to properly dress children, and that their method of feeding them is something worse than foolish. If any other reason were wanted to prove that women cannot manage children, it could very easily be found. Children, everyone must admit, are mere creatures of impulse. The old proverb says, "Bend the twig as you would have it grow," and surely it must be acknowledged that children are, as a rule, abominably behaved. That each has a natural instinct peculiar to itself must also be ad-

mitted, but that children are naturally bad I do not at all think. None of their other inclinations are in any way developed; therefore, why should it be imagined that they are inherently naughty? As a matter of fact, they are not. They are largely imitative, of course, and if they saw good manners going on about them, they would as instinctively imitate good behavior as they would bad. Everybody who has studied the question knows that they presume enormously, if they are allowed to do so; but, in the first place, if they did not see bad manners, and, in the second place, were checked in a timely fashion, they would give pleasure to everyone.

It is quite the exception to find a child who is at all bearable. Their fathers and their mothers put up with them, of course; but where is the child who is at all fit to be brought down to see company, and who can behave at all decently in the presence of strangers? It may be natural to a child to resent a toy being taken from him, but it is not natural that a child should fling himself down on the hearthrug in paroxysms of rage

on every available occasion. Children, as a rule, howl for everything; it is natural to them to cry when they are hurt, of course, but it is not natural that they should kick and plunge and bellow the whole house down be-



Children howl for everything.

cause they are not allowed to break something of value. If they are taught—that is to say, allowed to believe—that they will get anything they want by crying for it, of course they will cry; but if they are taught that the one certain way of *not* getting any-

thing is to cry for it, then crying is the very last thing they will resort to, for they are just as clever as monkeys. But women do not teach them this. As soon as the child cries for anything, a woman will give it to him sooner than go through the ordeal of hearing him cry. A child crying is a painful sight, and the very best way to go about stopping it is to show him that crying will do him no good.

A great deal of the bad manners of children is due to their mothers, but not directly so. The people who spoil them most are the servants, and here, I think, the child has very just reason to complain of the treatment he receives. If you keep your children all day and all night, week in and week out, year after year, in the company of low-bred, vulgar, and disinterested persons like servants, how can you expect that your children will grow up and behave themselves like little gentlemen and ladies, and that they will be fit to come down to the drawing-room or the dining-room, or to behave themselves like Christians? It is not reasonable. Chil-

dren ought to spend a very considerable portion of every day in the drawing-room with their mother, and should mix with her guests, and be taught to move about and not touch things, and not make themselves a nuisance to anyone. It is just as easy to teach a child to behave well as to behave badly. Of course, you must show the stronger will; but once you have established that, you can do anything with a child, and, believe me, it is the kindest thing to do. It must be distinctly understood, however, that I am no advocate for slapping or beating children in any way. It is absolutely unnecessary. The most unruly child will submit to a stronger will which prescribes slight punishments and sees them carried out. But if you once give way to a child, or go back on your word, you are making a rod for your own back, and your children, instead of becoming a comfort, grow up to be nothing short of little devils.

On the other hand, I do not at all maintain that you should never strike a child. There are some children who require it.

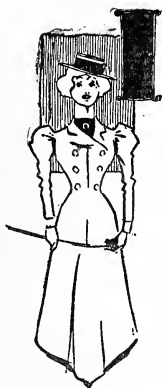
116 *The Domestic Blunders of Women*

They are very, very few, but there are some, as there are exceptions to everything. But there is one thing you should never do—you should never slap a child or correct him with your hand. There are two evils which result from this. The first is that no man or woman at all recognizes how strong his or her hand is when brought into contact with the tiny frame of a child. You may hurt children very seriously, and much more than you ever know. The second reason for not correcting a child with your hand is that you may not hurt him at all, and this is just as bad as the other—in fact, rather worse. There is only one way in which you should beat a child. You must go out into your garden, and get the very smallest switch which you can find, and when the unruly young gentleman's clothes are taken off him, you should give him two or three, or four or five sharp cuts where, as the French say, "*Le dos change le nom.*" If you do this properly, you certainly will not permanently injure the child, and there is a very great chance that you may never have to repeat an operation

which hurts you more than it does the child. But here again we have a proof of the absolute incapacity of a woman to manage children. A wife will contend with her husband that only women can manage children, but in the end she goes to her husband, and tells him that he must administer the corporal punishment, because she cannot bear to do it. This is not only bad for the child, but is grossly unfair to the man. It is a great shame that a father should be held up to a child as a bogey.

CHAPTER XI

THE HOUSE DIRTY



I WILL not confuse you, dear ladies, by telling you who it was who defined "dirt" as "matter out of place." It will be enough for your bird-like brains if you can remember the phrase, for one and all you dwell contentedly in dirt. If I were to leave this phrase unexplained, every single one of you would misinterpret it to mean I thought you were not addicted to clean linen and the bath, or that your minds are debased by the witnessing of sights or the perusal of books "in which pure women may not look." I have my own

ideas as to whether women, as a class, are better than men, but I am not arguing that point, now, and so do not, as is too often your way, let us confuse the premises by going off into side issues. I hope you understand distinctly that when I say you dwell contentedly in dirt, I confine my remarks within the limits of the definition that "dirt is matter out of place."

In another chapter I have shown you that your basements are the real dust-holes of your houses. I think I have disposed of the contention of many that all the faults laid at your kitchen-doors are not the fault of your favorite bugbear, the servants, but that you are directly responsible for both servants and their faults.

It is now my intention to carry the indictment further by taking it into every nook and corner, and not only into every nook and corner, but into every open place and every closed space in what you love to call a woman's domain. I do not think even the strongest-minded and the most pugnacious of you will deny the partiality which your

servants—women servants, mind you—have for sweeping dust and fluff into corners, under carpets, mats, and rugs, of disposing of burnt matches in fireplaces, of emptying dust-pans into baths, and sinks, and other places, and of leaving their brushes and brooms, their dusters, etc., etc., all over the house—in corners, under sofas, under (and even on) chairs, bureaus, on the stairs and landings, balanced on banisters and indeed anywhere they can temporarily dispose of them—to the entire disfigurement of the house when you come down in the morning.”

This putting away of things in places “handy-like” is a most deplorable system, but I cannot bring myself to blame the servants, for in it I see but a development of every woman’s methods of what she is pleased to call “tidying up” or “making the place straight.”

The clean and tidy little Japanese have practically no furniture at all in their houses. What they have is brought out when it is required for use, and when it has served its turn it is folded up and put away in its proper

place. This is also their habit with decorations. When a guest is expected the walls are hung with pictures, when tea is served trays and stools are brought in, and you find the house decorated with bronzes, ivories, and flowers. If a guest were unexpectedly to return half an hour after his departure, he would find that the pictures had been rolled up and put away, and, indeed, that the gaily-decorated room was perfectly bare.

Now, I do not go so far as to say that you should strictly follow out these methods of those clean and tidy little people, though they are all instinctively imbued with perfect taste and are the greatest decorative artists the world has ever known. But I do say that you might go a long way in imitating them with great advantage to art and cleanliness. I am very fond of good furniture, myself, as shall be demonstrated hereafter; but if a man of sense and taste were to go round his house and note and price all the hideous and superfluous articles that a woman strews round a house, he would be simply horrified. We have all a great deal too much

furniture, even when it is of the very best, and our walls are over-crowded with everything which can be stood against them or



A bonfire in the back-yard

hung upon them. To turn your walls into the semblance of a bric-à-brac shop or an ex-

hibition of pictures is in the worst of taste, and to make your rooms into a sort of furniture warehouse, is to make your home uncomfortable at the expense of art. But when the pictures, vases, clocks, chandeliers, candlesticks, and other so-called chimney ornaments, are of the most crude manufacture and in the most detestable taste, a husband who respects himself and his wife ought to send away his family to the seaside, and go out and pawn all the "china" and glass, and Parian marble figures he can lay hands on, and lose the ticket and all memory of where he has disposed of them. He then should buy a box of matches, and having gone all over the house, and gathered together all the antimacassars, mats, bulrushes, art muslin, bamboo work, carved Swiss brackets, reed curtains, Birmingham Japanese fans and other eyesores and dust traps he can lay hands on, he should make a bonfire in his back-yard. Foolish men, who repeat the nonsense they hear, are in the habit of saying, "It is easy to discern a feminine hand about a room." *It is* and if I had my way,

124 *The Domestic Blunders of Women*

no woman should have a hand in such mischief as is found "for idle hands to do."

Women suffer from the delusion that they are neat by nature, and that it is their mission in life to "tidy up." Their way of indulging this itch is to stuff things away—anywhere out of sight. On these lines the magpie and the monkey are their masters. The real secret of tidiness is to leave things where they can be found by the persons who require them, and not to hide them away in blotters and presses and drawers; not to go into a man's study and to put all his papers indiscriminately into packages, or a receipted bill into an envelope which he is sure to destroy.

In a woman's eye every business paper is an unsightly object, which she considers it her duty to dispose of, and though she may hear the man who owns it cursing about the house, she never has the grace of the jackdaw of Rheims to come forward and say what she has done with it. Indeed, she will deny with indignant innocence and tears that she ever touched his papers, and when,

if haply it is discovered, he looks reproachful or smiles, she simply says, "Oh! is that what you are looking for? my dear, you should not leave such things about." Just as if he had no right to the use of a table



or the corner of a chimneypiece in his own house.

Not only are women sublimely unreasonable in such matters, but their taste in the matter of decoration is most abominable.

I have accepted the definition that "dirt is matter out of place," and I have shown how important matters become dirt by being

put by tidying-up hands "out of place." I have hinted at some of the ways a house may be made dirty and hideous by being filled up with every form of dust-collecting atrocity which can be manufactured. I will now turn my attention to how women can even misapply nature to this end. Few would deny that flowers are very beautiful things in their right place. When they are matter out of place, they become, of course, according to our definition, dirt. There are few of women's delusions so firmly rooted as that "nothing is so pretty about a house as a few flowers." There are not many women who can resist spending a large proportion of their housekeeping money on what they call a few fresh flowers, on the pretext that the place would look so bare without them if any one came to tea. Now, in the first place, the flowers are *not* fresh, and, even if they were, they have been the close associates of others which have probably spent the night under the bed of a lodging-house, inhaling every kind of dirt and poison it is possible to collect. In the second place, as they grow stale,

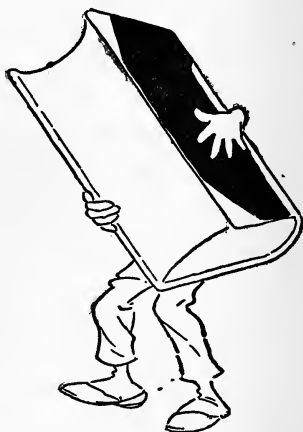
they and the water they are placed in give off evil fumes. Besides, they are entirely out of place stuck on tables which are meant to be used; and what with the cutting of stalks, the staining of scissors, and the slopping of



water in the initial stage, and the peril of their absurdly long and unstable glasses being upset and broken, they are about the most dangerous and most expensive folly that women waste their time over.

All that I have written here should go far to prove even to the prejudiced that women are untidy, and that, therefore, they permit or collect dirt about a house. This should be

enough; but I feel that if I do not draw the contrast which I have always drawn, the feminine mind, which it is my mission to correct, might reply with their favorite "*tu*



quoque"—which freely translated means, "you're another," and illustrates a woman's habit of arguing that two blacks make one white, two wrongs a right.

You, dear ladies, will no doubt say before you have read any further: "Oh! I like that.

Go into any husband's study and see how untidy it is." It is quite true that husband's studies are not given up to nice tidy *art* muslin, bamboo, bulrushes, imitation bronzes, and German "china" ornaments. They are filled with papers. Quite true! But papers are not necessarily more untidy than anything else, though you think so. What is the real reason why the papers are lying about? I will tell you. It is because, after years of experience, no man can trust you or your servants to touch his papers. Turn your eyes round his office next time you are there late. You will find all his letters are filed carefully, and his books are put away every night, and that he and his clerks can lay their hands on any paper at a moment's notice, while they know how everything which has gone away has been disposed of. That's what I call being tidy and being clear-minded.

CHAPTER XII

THE HOUSE HIDEOUS



IN the last chapter I inveighed against the furniture with which women lumber up their houses, and in my just indignation I went so far as to suggest that, after the Japanese fashion, we should have practically no furniture at all, and, really, though I meant to modify that statement in my present essay, I have a good mind to stick to my original plea. It is really extraordinary what slaves women are to custom, and the ordinary man is very much of the same unthinking way.

One of the most remarkable things in the world is the custom of keeping a dog—the

most absolutely useless creature—for he does no work of any kind, and he is not good to eat. Yet man, who is supposed to be a thinking animal with his own thoughts to fall back upon, seems not to be able to exist unless he keeps a dog, which he feeds, buys a license for, redeems when it is stolen or strays, and pays continual fines for every time that it fights another dog, or mangles his neighbor's child. I suppose that one way and another, considering that many men keep many dogs, on an average every home in this country pays at least ten dollars a year towards the support of dogs. The millions a year this represents it may amuse my readers to work out for themselves. The same applies to cats. I shall never forget seeing a very charming and benevolent lady of my acquaintance cut a plate of meat off her own joint and place it in the square for the cats to eat, while she stood by and saw that the hungry children, who could not catch sparrows or mice, did not steal it.

If I digress, it is but for the purpose of schooling you quietly into accepting the fact

132 *The Domestic Blunders of Women*

that we are slaves to furniture as we are slaves to dogs and cats, for, really, the dog is not nearly so much "the friend of man" as man is the friend of dog. Of course, the real fact is that the dog is mentally the superior creature, and, being a philosopher—having settled in his own mind that work is all



nonsense, that there is no such thing as riches, that all, even the most successful or brilliant, man ever gets out of the world is enough to eat and a bed to die in—the dog, like the woman, gives himself over to a man, displays a certain affection for him, and the vain, foolish fellow works hard, and keeps the dog in lazy luxury all his life. Men talk

of hard work as "a dog's life." Was there ever such irony?

If man is the slave of dog, woman is the slave of furniture. If women only knew how much more graceful—and the only way is to appeal to their vanity—they would be reclining on the floor, they would never sit up on chairs or round a table. That this is fundamentally true is proved by the fact that



they are never so happy as at a picnic, where there are no chairs and tables. I really believe that the craze for putting everything on something above the floor—by which I mean tables, sideboards, etc.—grew from the custom of sleeping in ugly, cumbersome, and

dirt-collecting beds instead of on the floor. Of course, the reason why women do not sleep on the floor is because they are afraid of beetles, and mice, and other harmless things. Woman, therefore, having invented the bed, invented the table to stand by it, and thus spread the habit of putting everything above the level of the floor.

Woman's original sin of being afraid of black beetles and mice costs man more than all the Royalty, armies, navies, pension lists, prisons, poverty, schooling, national debts, and wars of Europe.

I am sure I am not putting it too high when I say that the average cost of furniture per house is \$1,000, and if the world would only agree not to cumber its rooms with beds and tables, sideboards, cabinets and chairs, our ground-rents would be about half what they are, and the over-crowding of our cities would come down proportionately.

But as women cannot be persuaded that black beetles are not poisonous serpents, and that mice are not man-eating tigers, it may be well to see how the furniture question,

from the financial and hideous point of view, can be got over. Of course, half the difficulty of expense and ugliness would be done away with if all presses, cupboards, sideboards, seats, dressers, etc., which protrude into the rooms were let into the walls, thereby making charming recesses, and giving an opportunity for graceful arches.

But as most houses "are not built that way," some more practical suggestion is needed. To say that a sideboard, four feet by six, is required to support half a dozen tumblers, which ought to be kept in the pantry, and a cabinet of the same proportions is needed to hide a few pieces of music, is absurd. And so we see that a large proportion of our furniture is intended, not for use, but as ornament.

That most of the furniture which we find in middle-class houses is as bad in design and execution as it is in its lasting powers will be generally admitted.

Nearly every man's experience teaches him that when his or his friend's furniture is sold, it does not fetch a third of what it

cost, and that fine old furniture purchased from a dealer fetches a high price. And yet, apparently, very few men and women learn the obvious lesson. Needless to say, the generality of men know little or nothing about the matter. To do them justice they



Something really cheap.

generally admit as much, the result being that their wives, who think there is nothing to know, and who like spending money, undertake to procure "what is wanted."

They follow the same rule as they adopt in purchasing anything else. They go to a shop and ask the price of things which are

as ugly as they are bad and expensive, and with these they fill their houses, and are moved to tears when they eventually are sold and fetch nothing, as the popular phrase runs.

There are fifty-two weeks in the year, and not one of these passes that there are not some forty or fifty sales by auction in a city like London or New York alone. There is no doubt that a good deal of rubbish is sold at these sales; but I have attended hundreds in my time, and I do not think I am exaggerating when I say I do not remember ever having been to a sale at which there was not something really good and really cheap. Before making her house hideous forever, of course a woman should learn something of furniture. It is a very easy and a very pleasant acquirement, and when once mastered, is a never-failing delight to herself and to all her friends, for it always makes conversation, and as long as a woman has something to talk about, she is happy; and men, who like her, think she is very well informed.

138 *The Domestic Blunders of Women*

I could very easily write a dissertation on furniture, china, bronzes, and all the bric-à-brac which goes to make a house pleasant to live in. Such, however, is not my intention. Such information is plentiful, and I am quite sure nothing useful is to be learned therefrom. The best way is to potter about. I remember asking an old second-hand bookseller how he learned his business, and he frankly admitted that he picked up the greater portion of his knowledge from his customers. I have found by experience that this is the real truth. The fact is, nobody knows everything about anything; but any one who knows anything will be only glad of a chance to show his knowledge to an appreciative listener, oddly enough, even if he is not a customer.

I well remember when I commenced buying nice things myself. Nobody could have been more supremely ignorant than I was. The reason, too, was an odd one. I had had a great reverse of fortune; we were very poor indeed, and the little new house into which we moved was almost as bare as the

walls of a vault or a chapel. I said I should like to try and pick up a few nice things cheap, but every one told me that those times had gone by; that people now know too much, and that I would only be "sold." I did try, and I found, as usual, that what every one said was wrong. Like every one else who succeeds, I bought my experience in dimes, and made the world pay for it in dollars. The proof of the pudding is not in the eating, but in the digesting of it. I commenced very modestly by buying old Staffordshire figures, and of course I have been "sold," but I have had my victories, and I can truthfully say that my collection of bric-à-brac, such as it is—and it would fetch a few thousands to-morrow—has not cost me one dollar.

But this is personal. The strange thing is that women who love to attend sales which are not "sales" at all in the proper acceptation of the term, and will willingly buy goods for \$1.49, which the day before they could have bought for \$1.25, will not attend auction rooms and buy really good furniture

140 *The Domestic Blunders of Women*

for a third of the money for which they can buy bad furniture in a shop.

Another reason for buying furniture when sold at auction is this. As a rule you have



Then you offer him 5 per cent. on his bargain.

only the dealers to compete with, and it is always safe to outbid the dealers, who cannot afford, except in exceptional cases where they have a commission, to buy anything

unless they can see a profit of 50 per cent. on it.

Another tip is, sometimes to let a dealer have something he is bidding against you for, and then to offer him 5 per cent. on his bargain. Unless it is a very good thing, which he can easily dispose of quickly for a large profit, he will generally take your offer, and you may reckon that it has cost you 45 per cent. less than if you bought it from the dealer when he had paid the expenses of taking it away to his shop.



CHAPTER XIII

THE BEST REMEDY FOR ALL BLUNDERS



NO doubt at the end of every chapter my readers have put down this book with the ejaculation: "All this is very fine; but what does the man want?" Or, "It is very easy to find fault; but what's the good, unless the author is prepared to show us a remedy?" I ask for no kinder criticism, and if I only prevail on my fair readers to adopt my suggestion, I shall be content, for I have been "cruel only to be kind" to man and woman alike.

I commenced by saying "the house" was a branch of "the office," and that a wife should be a partner in the concern. That was my text, and I will be consistent and stick to

it. I have far easier found the remedy than the faults. The remedy is quite simple. A business cannot be carried on unless accounts are kept. There is no good in denying this. It has been proved over and over again. It is easy to say "what's the good of keeping accounts of money that is spent? keeping accounts won't put the money back in the bank." That's right in theory, but it does not work out in practice. Keeping accounts *will* put money back in the bank. Dear ladies, this is business, and you don't understand business; but try it for a few years, and, as a reward, leave me half the balance in your wills. My children will die rich if you do this.

You will not believe me when I say that, no matter how prosperous is the business of your husband, your father, or your lover, supposing any one of them were making a profit of fifty dollars a day, and had done so for years, if he were to put that money in his pocket and not keep any accounts he would be bankrupt in a year. You don't believe it? You say it is only another of my

paradoxes. Go to your husband, your father, or your lover, and ask—"What would happen to your business if you kept no accounts?" I should like to lay you a pair of gloves against the usual forfeit that they each say—"I should be bankrupt in a year," and every woman in England would give me a kiss on the same terms.

I suppose there are not many of my readers who will try, and I am sure there are very few who do try who will keep it up; but if they want to refute all my arguments, and make this book of no more value, they will expend a quarter on a simple little account-book, in which they will enter every penny they spend, and, most important of all, they will balance it up every week.

Household expenditure should be thus regulated on business lines. The husband should enter into a working arrangement with his partner. A list of all expenses should be drawn up, and every week she should produce her book and ask for a check, not only to meet the average weekly expenses, but to

include the rent, rates, taxes, wages, clothes, and school bills as they fall due.

It would be impossible in these pages to draw up a series of tables to fit all incomes and tastes. I have drawn up one, but I am sure some will say that \$2.24 is absurdly small for the butcher's book, and that two dollars is absurdly large for the fishmonger; there are people who think they are saving by having no fish and eating five dollars worth of butcher's meat. Some there are, too, who will say one dollar and fifty cents is absurdly little for washing, and others that it is too much. The explanation is that some "wash at home" and some do not. The items and amounts, however, do not matter at all. Arrange them all according to your own habits and incomes, but arrange them on these lines:

If your house rent is \$400 a year, your weekly rent is \$7.65. That is arrived at by dividing \$400 by 52, the number of weeks in the year. You will find it is a fraction under, but no husband with any sense will mind

•

146 *The Domestic Blunders of Women*

giving you the benefit of the fraction. Continue in the same way with every item of expenditure, and you will find the result will, be something like the following :

Rent@\$400.....	\$ 7.65
Taxes, Water, etc.....	1.54
Gas.....	1.00
Wages.....	4.00
Stationery, Stamps, etc.....	1.50
Doctor and Druggist.....	2.00
Cleaning windows and scrubbing...	1.50
Hardware and Linen.....	1.00
1 child's clothes	1.00
Wife's clothes.. ..	2.50
14 pounds butcher's meat	2.24
14 quarts milk, at 8 cents.....	1.08
24 eggs, at 25 cents a doz.....	.50
Baker.....	.75
Fish.....	2.00
Grocer and vegetable man.....	5.00
Washing.....	1.50
Coal.. ..	2.00
Petty cash.....	1.00
	<hr/>
	\$39.76

You will see from this that, if this fairly represents your expenditure, you are living at the rate of about \$2,200 a year, for there are yet your husband's clothes, railway fares, tobacco, etc., to be paid for, and only \$132.48 left with which to provide them. Still, if you

would present him every week with a balance sheet such as the following, I feel sure you would be able to lend him something to go on with from time to time:—

MODEL OF BALANCE-SHEET OF WEEK.

January 6th.

Received by check.....\$39.76

January 6th.

Butcher's Book.....	\$ 2.24
Milk.....	1.08
Baker75
Fishmonger and Poulterer.....	2.00
Grocer and vegetable man.....	5.00
Washing.....	1.50
Petty cash.....	1.00
Coal.....	2.00

\$15.57

Average Rent, Taxes, Gas, Wages,
Stamps, etc., Stationery, Doctor,
Chemist, Clothes, Windows, Re-
pairs, Hardware, and Linen, as
agreed per above list.....\$24.19

\$39.76

Having paid your household expenses of the week, amounting to \$15.57, you would have \$24.19 in your bank, and your following week's balance-sheet, provided your

148 *The Domestic Blunders of Women*

weekly books amounted to as much as last week, would read as follows:—

January 12th.

Balance in Bank.....	\$24.19
Check received....	39.76
	<hr/>
	\$63.95

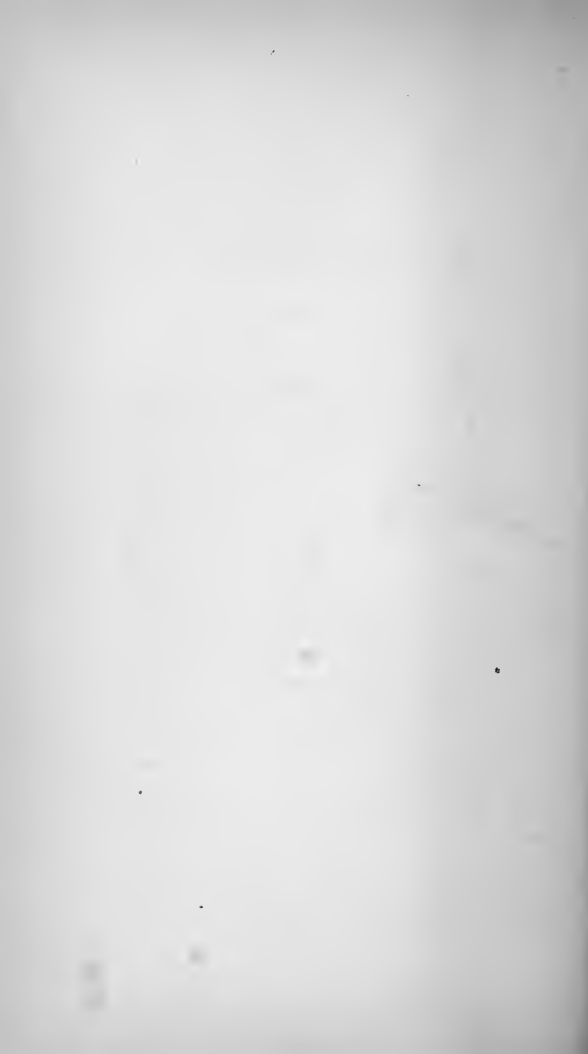
January 12th.

Butcher's Book..	\$2.24
Milk....	1.08
Baker.....	.75
Fishmonger and Poulterer	2.00
Grocer and vegetable man.....	5.00
Washing....	1.50
Petty Cash....	1.00
Coal....	2.00
	<hr/>
	\$15.57
Average Rent, etc., as agreed.....	24.19
	<hr/>
	\$39.76
Balance at Bank.....	24.19
	<hr/>
	\$63.95

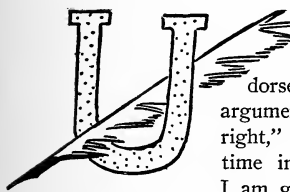
Having once more paid your household expenses for the week, your balance at the bank would be \$63.95, and you would enter it on your next week's balance-sheet, being careful, of course, to see that the totals on each side balanced as before.

This may look very formidable at first sight, but it is really as simple as A B C; and your husband would explain it to you, and straighten it up every week for you. As a matter of fact, you are sure to spend little sums which you will forget. I won't say that doesn't matter, but it doesn't matter much. The main thing is to keep some account, and the odd pence which you can't remember can always be put right by adjusting the "petty cash." Indeed, that is what the "petty cash" is for. If you will master this simple rule, you will have overcome the most serious of all the "Domestic Blunders of Women," and have attained, as I have,

THE END.



CORRESPONDENCE



RUGUAYAN heartily endorses *A Mere Man's* arguments. "You are right," he says, "every time in your articles. I am glad to say that they don't touch my

wife, who is wonderfully free from the mistakes you point out—tho not as perfect as if she had been regularly trained to housekeeping as men are trained to business. Now do you not think that regular training schools should be started to teach housekeeping and domestic economy? They should be on a very strict business footing—in fact, I think girls might go out as apprentices to restaurants and hotels. If they did so, then it would be an easier matter to get houses attended to by an outside gang of servants, *i. e.*, meals from the restaurant at the corner, housemaids and win-

152 *The Domestic Blunders of Women*

dow cleaners in at regular hours, floor scrubbers, lamp cleaners, boot cleaners, etc., the whole job undertaken by a responsible firm for a single payment. Breakages and theft covered also. Girls who had had experience of hotel management would welcome such assistance.

"Our experience is that of the 'Housekeeper of Twenty Years,' that my wife knows too much for a bad servant to put up with. Consequently we have had perhaps a dozen changes a year, but as many come back to us again, and we often keep a good one some time—till they marry—it cannot be a bad place. We have, however, made a discovery, and find we can get a very superior class of servant, and any number of them at lower wages than an ordinary servant, and a far more intelligent class, but I must not give this away.

"But the trouble after all is that all the young men crowd round a pretty face and a smart frock, and don't ask for a certificate of competency before they marry—and therefore they must abide by the consequences of *THEIR unbusiness-like* conduct.

"You are right, too, about the children. My wife takes jolly good care of hers. We have been married ten years and never had the least disagreement, and she was one of the smart ones, too."

PEGGIE contributes the following amusing comment. "I take the liberty of sending you this old Scottish song in connection with the subject, with which you are dealing:—

JOHN GRUMLIE

John Grumlie swore by the light o' the moon
And the green leaves on the tree,
That he could do more work in a day,
Than his wife could do in three.
His wife rose up in the morning,
With cares and toils e'now,
' John Grumlie, bide at hame, John,
An' I'll gae haud the plough.

' First ye maun dress your children fair,
And put on them their gear;
And ye maun mind to turn the maut,
Or else ye'll spoil the beer.
And ye maun reel the tweel, John,
That I span yesterday,
And ye maun mind to ca' in the hens,
Or they'll a' lay away.'

Oh, he did dress his children fair,
And put on them their gear;
But he forgot to turn the maut,
And so he spoiled the beer.
He merrily sang as he reel'd the tweel
His wife span yesterday;
But he forgot to ca' in the hens,
And the hens a' laid away.

154 *The Domestic Blunders of Women*

The hawkit crummie let doon nae milk,
 He cream nor butter gat;
 And a gaed wrang, and nocht gaed richt,
 He danced wi' rage and grat.
 Then up he ran to the head o' the knowe,
 Wi' mony a wave and shout,
 She heard him, as she heard him not,
 And turned her stots about.

John Grumlie's wife cam hame at e'en,
 And lauched as she'd gae mad,
 To see the house in siccan a plight,
 And John sae glum and sad.
 Quoth he, 'I give up my housewife skep,
 I'll be nae mair gude-wife.'
 'Indeed,' quo she, 'I'm weel content.
 Ye may keep it the rest o' your life.'

'Nae mair o' that,' quo' surly John,
 'I'll do as I've done before,'
 Wi' that the gude-wife took up a stoot rung
 And John made off to the door.
 'Stop, stop, gude-wife, I'll haud my tongue,
 I ken I'm sair to blame,
 But henceforth I maun haud the plough,
 And ye maun bide at hame.'"

.

N. B. is singularly appreciative, and says:—
 "I *almost* wrote to you after the inspired article on the 'Highly Respectable Person,' but the handle of the dresser drawer has settled it. You may be rather bitter, and at times somewhat unjustly sweeping in your remarks,

but you certainly are the most wonderful man! I find it difficult to believe that you *are* one—but then no woman could write in quite such a trenchant style as yours. How do you find out all these little things that have been hidden deeply in woman's breast all these ages? I should like to know. *Do* tell me how you do it—it is, most of it, so wonderfully and fearfully true. But I do wish that after stating some glaring fault you would give us the remedy. You simply make us unhappy without cheering us up again. I really feel every week as if I had had a kind of mental shower-bath. I am not a particularly good house-keeper myself, but I am young (23), and have time to improve. I have had a useful kind of husband, who is a great help to me in my various little difficulties. He is much impressed with your remarks *re* butchers and coal bills, and I believe intends to act on them, at any rate with regard to the latter. I am looking forward with the greatest interest to your article on children. If you can, tell me how to manage a painfully intelligent boy of three, who treats his mother with affectionate patronage, but never takes any notice of what she says.

“That is really a great difficulty of mine. He is *perfectly* good and obedient to his father, and equally fond of him, but I can't manage him at all; and the worst of it is the baby,

another boy of eighteen months, begins to imitate him. I suppose boys are more difficult to manage than girls."

.

A NON-IMPROVING PROPERTY begins an interesting letter by saying of "A Mere Man":—"I cannot feel quite sure whether he is writing a skit on domestic management, or whether he is writing it seriously. If the former, he is, I think, just a little too serious, if the latter, too sweeping. It is said a woman has no sense of humor; that being understood, I am going to take 'A Mere Man' seriously.

"He certainly states the case correctly as regards the many, but surely he will allow there is a very large exception that goes to prove this rule. English and American women labor under a great disadvantage in their domestic arrangements as compared with, say, the French, and, so far as I know to the contrary, many other countries. We, as a rule, are not happy without absolute privacy in home life, its retail shopping, and consequently high prices, its washing days with its proverbial cold mutton; each little house has its own separate management, or as your 'Mere Man' would say its mismanagement. It is useless for him to compare it to his own or other men's businesses, the two things can never be parallel

under present circumstances. His affairs are all worked on business lines and on a whole-sale scale, where, as he says, estimates of different expenses can be obtained in all its branches. This could be done in households if we could bring ourselves to live as the French do; outside their homes chiefly, at cafés, restaurants, boarding-houses and hotels, where everything is publicly arranged and catered for, and all is done on a business and whole-sale system. As it is, with our craving for domestic privacy, we must put up with its attendant evils, with the exception of those comparatively few who are good managers and lucky in obtaining the cooperation of sensible servants and easy circumstances. And yet, with all my lack of humor, I still think 'A Mere Man' may be writing only a clever skit with a large amount of truth in it."

.

GRANDMOTHER puts her points well:—"As a woman of experience, I beg to offer a few observations. I have always thought and believed, and still do so, that domestic comfort is almost entirely in the hands of the wife; the husband can do little towards it, although he may observe that there is much to be done or altered. Nor can a husband so completely view a household as can his wife.

158 *The Domestic Blunders of Women*

If the wife is early, punctual, attends to domestic duties, so that the husband and father finds meals ready and well served, and children and servants under proper control, he will in time, though perhaps slowly, learn to value and respect his home, and the wife will find in that her great reward; but if she fails in those duties, and she who ought to have been his guiding star is lost behind a cloud of idleness, frivolity, and perhaps extravagance, the husband is adrift, helpless, and finds comfort where he can.

“The tendency of the last thirty years, to train girls for the acquirement of knowledge, scientific, linguistic, mathematical, mechanical, and the utter neglect of domestic training, is bringing forth bitter fruit, and sowing at the same time the seed of future family misery. I can tell you of two nice girls of fourteen and sixteen, sent to a college daily, to the neglect of domestic interest; in about three years the younger was in her grave, overtaxed, both mentally and physically; in about five years the elder followed her. Neither of those girls could do needlework or follow any domestic pursuit. I can tell you of two more who said to their mothers, ‘Oh take us home; we never see any of you.’ Those mothers wisely did so. Where can a girl learn domestic duties if not in her own home? In Canada each girl takes a part in domestic work, and they

prove good wives. Let mothers keep their daughters at home. denying them no reasonable educational advantages."

.

A MERE WOMAN handles this subject sensibly: "I have read with very much interest, amusement, and, I must confess, a little anger, the letters of 'A Mere Man.' Your correspondent is not a new variety of man, by any means; in fact, he is quite a 'common or garden' sort, the 'man who knows,'—or thinks he does. We (apparently superfluous) women meet him frequently. While strongly protesting against 'A Mere Man's' unjustly sweeping condemnation of my sex, I am bound to admit, as I think will all women who have given the matter any thought, that he is justified in much of his complaint; but may a kindly providence preserve us from his remedy! He may prove in theory his superior fitness for the duties and responsibilities of 'home-keeper,' but I venture to say, not in practice.

"I feel very strongly on this subject, and have felt sad and indignant many times, as I have seen how very few women—comparatively speaking—seemed to realize their responsibilities and immense influence; but surely it is not because they are unfit and incapa-

ble of filling their place in the world. The real reason, it seems to me, is because women are not prepared for it. Every boy is prepared and trained for the business or profession he is to adopt; his education is conducted with that end in view, and he usually serves an apprenticeship under a master before he finally enters upon his career.

"In my opinion, the career of wife, mother, and housekeeper is of more importance than any other, and to what business or profession is so little training and preparation given? At what college or school is a girl taught anything of importance, relating to the care of a home and children, the management and value of money? I believe a great deal more is being done than formerly, especially among the poor, but it is merely a drop in the ocean compared with what might be done, and tho in many cases the home training is excellent, and, as a rule, a good housewife is the result, it is not so in the majority of cases.

"The poor mother has not the time, even if she has the ability, to teach her child housewifery. As soon as she leaves school she goes to help to keep another woman's house, without training, and disastrous is the result, as we who have to struggle with servants know; but that eternal grievance would be remedied if only a mistress understood what she required her servant to do.

"The average well-to-do and rich woman appears to think it quite unnecessary that her daughter should have a practical knowledge of nursing, cooking, and household management generally, in order to direct her servants, should she have a home of her own. I believe woman's place is by the *side* of man, *not* behind, and not in front, as some of my sisters appear to believe, and she should be given every educational advantage that man has, which, with her own special training, will make her far more fit to perform the duties of wife and mother than her uneducated sister.

"How can she manage the money entrusted to her with judgment and economy unless she has been taught the value of it? Does every man become a good business or professional man, and manage his affairs wisely and economically? What of the failures one too often meets, the men who are the 'hindmost' in the race for life and all it holds? It would be unfair to take such a man and hold him forth as a type of manhood, and say, man is not fit for the place in the world which he occupies; neither is it fair to take an incompetent woman and treat her as a representative of her sex. I cannot help thinking that 'A Mere Man's' domestic experiences must have been unusually unfortunate, to have given him such an unfair and distorted opinion of woman."

.

E. J. J. writes with common sense: "Altho agreeing with a great many of 'A Mere Man's' remarks, I cannot help seeing that in some respects he is rather unreasonable. How, for instance, can he expect his household expenses to decrease as his family grows up? As the children grow older, there is naturally an increase in the expenditure; there may no longer be school bills to pay, but there are others which more than take their place. A grown-up daughter requires far more amusement than a little girl in the schoolroom; she insists on being taken to all kinds of gaieties, and, greatest expense of all, she persuades her mother to entertain, and dinners, dances, and garden parties are the result.

"All women are not good housekeepers, any more than all men are good men of business; but I feel sure that a house managed by a man would not, as a rule, be a success. Are bachelor establishments usually particularly well managed? Is not the unfortunate bachelor more often than not cheated right and left by his laundress and his housekeeper?

"Even a widower usually has an aunt or a sister to look after his house and children, and if he does try to get along by himself, in nine cases out of ten his children run wild, his servants are careless and idle, and his house dirty and untidy. Of course this miserable state of affairs also occurs when the wife and

mother is indolent and undomesticated; but I, for my part, cannot think of a single case in which a man, left with a young family, has, alone and unaided, taken the reins of government into his hands, and produced a comfortable and well-organized household. 'A Mere Man' says, 'as regards children, men manage schools.' This is true enough, but men do not as a rule manage girls' schools; neither are little children sent to school, and, unfortunately, both girls and babies are to be found in most families. However, I have no doubt the men could get over this difficulty, and manage their children with the greatest ease, but I should be sorry for the children who were managed at home on the same principles as when at school."

.

AN OLD DUTCH gives her opinions thus:—
"Your accusations are too numerous and varied to deal with, but, as a wife and mistress of a house, I should like to say that my husband could enter his kitchen, late at night, as you suggest, without finding it the back slum of the house; neither would the drawers and cupboards be found to contain a heterogeneous mass of things. I have taken up the kitchen grievance in preference to others, because I consider that the state of things that exist

164 *The Domestic Blunders of Women*

in that department will generally prove what kind of a mistress is at its head. I think surely there are some of us who have a little respect for our husband's purse, and also for his comfort, tho we may not get the credit of it, and I shall look forward, before you close your highly entertaining delineation of our characters, to the hope that you will discover we possess *some* good qualities as befit man's helpmeet, and that we are not altogether useless 'lumber' on the face of the earth."

.

VASHTI speaks for her sex as follows:—"I presume you do not object to non-rancorous criticism, and consequently I am emboldened to take a brief on behalf of my fellow-laborers, and ask that a search-light may be thrown impartially over the whole question.

"To begin with, then, may I ask, with all deference, if you do not think that men are a little to blame for the state of affairs in their households?

"Would it not be reasonable to expect that when a man feels matrimonially inclined he should look out for use rather than ornament, *if* he wishes his household to be governed on the most economic principles? Yet how few do this! It strikes me very forcibly that during courtship outside attraction goes a long,

long way in front of solid merit. I gather from your own papers that your wife was not chosen for her useful abilities. For what, then? I have no doubt for a pretty face and an engaging manner! Well then, sir, I do not think you ought to blame us for unbusiness-like ways in our houses, when by your own admission you choose the head officer of your household for the very qualities you would scout in choosing a clerk, and without one thought as to whether she was capable of filling the post you offered.

“Personally, I do not think it *is* reasonable to expect men to be entirely practical in a matter where love—real or so-called—is an important factor; but then I do not think they ought to upbraid their wives later on for the absence of qualities they were never asked to possess. I believe one of the first principles of political economy is, that demand creates supply, and we must hope that when fathers begin to realize that the young men of the future will expect their wives to be trained and proved housekeepers, they will take greater interest in the proper education of their daughters, instead of spending everything on their sons.

“To pass on to the question of servants, I much admire the theories you advance for their management, and think they would be excellent could they but be put into practice;

166 *The Domestic Blunders of Women*

but fear that unless a trades union for mistresses were formed it would be impossible to enforce them.

"It is illegal in some localities to impose fines on servants, or deduct for breakages from their wages, without an agreement, and suppose I were to try to make my servants sign any such document, I feel sure they would be wise enough to betake themselves to another situation where they could break with impunity.

"If you are serious in your desires for reform, I wish most earnestly you would act as a reformer and earn the gratitude of all mistresses by starting a trades union of this description. I should only be too pleased to give in my name as one of the first to join, and would bring many friends with me.

"I must tell you I am one of 'the few' who keep a stock-pot always going, and have soup in plenty all the year round, without buying any stock meat whatsoever. We also keep a pig, and consequently the objectionable swill pail; but I do not think much goes into it that ought not to do so.

"Regarding coal, it is certainly true we burn more in winter than in summer, but not to an appalling amount; and considering that in summer we always have cold suppers instead of late dinner, I think the bills are pretty nearly

as they ought to be. We buy flour and potatoes by the sack.

"In conclusion, I should like to add that altho I have paid my bills regularly month by month for the eight years I have been married, I am positive I have not ruined my husband's credit, nor do I think it would be easy to do so, and I think in regard to that, you must have had small trades-people or clerks living in a large town in your mind, as I cannot think that regular payments could at all affect a professional man's credit."

.

A. A. is at once complimentary and self-satisfied:—"I was delighted to read your article of this week on the management of children; your previous papers I have only read with amusement. They do not apply to us, as my husband would like to tell you; but *this* is a subject that deeply interests me. *Every word you say is true*, no language is strong enough in which to condemn the idiotic way of clothing children, which is considered by everybody a matter of course; it is marvelous to me that so many survive such treatment; but the discomfort the poor little things endure must be cruel. I have one child, a little girl of seven, who has been warmly and decently clad,

according to your ideas and mine (and no one else's, it seems to me) from the time she was a few weeks old, and she has never had an illness in her life, and has been *entirely free* from the perpetual cold in the head from which most babies seem to suffer, and which is caused, I am sure, by such management, or rather *mismanagement*, as fills you with indignation.

"If you can arouse women to a sense of the proper way in which to bring up a child from its birth to the age of three or four years, you will accomplish one of the reforms of the century. I wish you every success in your crusade."

.

A QUIET CRITIC writes as follows:—"I am much interested in 'The Blunders of Women,' being a woman who has blundered all her life! But I think, in common justice, Paterfamilias should go to the root of the matter, which is *Human Nature*, not *Woman Nature*. Man selects his mate through passion chiefly, and is naturally in a hurry—therefore he does not give himself time to select wisely. So, most men marry fools, or did—(the old order changeth—perhaps!) and fools breed other fools, and fools bring up their children foolishly, spoil their husbands, or worry them, or let their husbands ignore them. Ergo—blame Human

Nature in *men* first, then eliminate it—if you can—and women will be wiser.”

.

HOMO speaks out and says:—“ ‘A Mere Man’ is rather over-reaching himself. At first there was a large undercurrent of truth in his letters; lately, however, he seems to me that he is greatly exaggerating the ‘Blunders.’

“I am a married man—and have been so a long time—I never saw my kitchen in the state he mentions. I have been in the kitchens of many other houses, and have never seen the mess there either.

“With regard to the ‘servant question,’ it is easy to take the stand he does respecting the management—but you cannot do with them as you would with your clerks. With clerks the supply is greater than the demand—with servants the demand greater than the supply—and the result is the servant has the whip hand. Still there is truth in what he says—a good mistress makes a good servant. My wife has no trouble to speak of with hers, and she keeps them a long time—one great secret being, from what I can see—always to be ‘firm, friendly, but *never* familiar.’

“Well, our mutual friend may be able to manage his household affairs better than his wife, but I am jolly well sure I could not—nor

could the bulk of my friends manage theirs as well as their better halves. I am quite certain there is not an atom of waste in any single way in this house, and were it not for my wife I should be a poorer man to-day than I am.

“One point has struck me, and it must have struck others.

“Of necessity ‘Mere Man’ has formed his original impressions from his own home—for he could not have obtained them from outside sources, since men as a rule are not fond of airing such grievances—is he not, then, giving himself away, and coming to the conclusion that all homes are as badly managed as his own?

“One more point. Economy to a certain extent is all very well, but do you think that every man wants to run his home upon the same lines as his business? Is there not enough scheming, sweating, haggling, etc., in the average man’s daily life to satisfy him? To me it is positive relief to be able to pay, say, my grocer a halfpenny a pound more for bacon, than necessary; it doesn’t hurt me, and may mean to him just the difference between loss and profit. This everlasting competition is wearing men’s lives out in business—why force it into private life if not absolutely necessary?”

.

It is the opinion of AN EXCEPTIONAL WOMAN that "A Mere Man" would do a great deal of good by his letters if women could only find it in their hearts to be less prejudiced and a little broader-minded with regard to a man's judicious interference in domestic matters.

"If women," she says, "would look at housekeeping in a more business-like way, I feel sure that their husbands themselves, and their children would benefit greatly thereby. It stands to reason that a successful man of business must know something of what he is about, and that such a man would not interfere in his wife's domestic arrangements without good cause, so that if the wife of such a man would listen patiently, without prejudice, she must obtain *some* advantage from his advice. But, as a rule, women will not listen, or, if they do so, with their mind made up beforehand that he knows nothing, and that his advice is, in consequence, unworthy.

"But is this, after all, all a woman's fault? I think a woman is treated much more unfairly than a man. In her girlhood she is taught, besides her ordinary education, which she shares with her brother, to play the piano, to do a little painting, and drawing, and sewing, and then she is considered as an accomplished woman, fit to take the responsibilities

of a wife and housekeeper, the business in life of the majority of women.

“ But her brother is only allowed one or two of these accomplishments by way of recreation. He is put in his father’s office, he is apprenticed to his business, and taught it thoroughly from the first grade upwards. Who would ever thrust a young man into a post as manager of a business without his first having had a training for it, and expect him to manage it in a proper manner without having any one to show or guide him? But this is what is thrust upon women, and then they are blamed for their blunders.

“ If fathers insisted upon their daughters being taught properly, and, like their brothers, apprenticed in their own particular line of life, *their* husbands and children would feel the benefit of their education, and this would tend to enlarge and broaden the minds of the women themselves, which are, without doubt, much biased and crippled in this respect at present.”

.

OLD BUFFER writes:—“ Dear ‘ Mere Man,’ —All praise to you for your outspoken papers.

“ If anything is required to clinch your remarks on the insane ‘ short-coating,’ the following figures from the tables of mortality should do it:—

LONDON MORTALITY.

Age.	Number living.	Decrement of death in the next year.
Birth	10.000	3.191
1 year	6.809	1.235
2 "	5.574	538
3 "	5.036	360
4 "	4.676	243

" Thus, in the first year, 32 per cent. ; in the first two years, 44 per cent. ; and the first three years, 50 per cent. of the children born die, many of them, no doubt, from the undue exposure of their tender little bodies.

" Peg away, my dear sir ; peg away ! "

.

A MERE GIRL writes with considerable ability and point. She says:—" Your letters on our domestic blunders have amused, interested, and occasionally made me very angry. I quite agree with you that we girls are badly educated in domestic matters, and have occasionally to buy our experiences. But it is not altogether our fault. Until eighteen or nineteen we are kept busy passing exams., in order to fit us for work in case of depreciation of property, and then—if there be no mother—paterfamilias deserts his club, and settles down, while his

daughter is supposed perfectly capable of 'running' a house without assistance. I speak from personal experience.

.

A FRIENDLY CRITIC says:—"Like many other women readers, I have been following your course of articles with great interest. Though unwilling to say so, I must admit that you have put your finger on many sore spots in our domestic life and management. But you appear to me to lay to our door sins for which we are not responsible. You say 'the plague of London hardly equaled the infant mortality of a city like London or New York alone.' The same might probably be said of any large city, and as women are the caretakers of the children of these cities, you argue that they are to blame for the high infant death-rate.

"Is it not a fact that the large death-rates of all our cities are produced by deaths amongst the children of the poor? Is it not also a fact that amongst the poor the mother of the family goes out to daily work of some kind or other, and is in many cases the sole breadwinner for her family? She may do the best she can to provide some one to look after her children in her absence, but what proper supervision can there be in such cases?

"Again, are not many deaths directly or indirectly due to starvation? Is the unfortunate mother of the family to blame when the earnings, scanty at the best—which ought to provide food for the children—are spent in drink, or when bad times come, and there are no earnings at all? Again, I do not at all agree with you that nearly all children are born healthy. Very many come into the world handicapped by hereditary disease.

"When you speak of institutions for girls admirably managed by men, do you mean to say that in such institutions there is no female superintendent, or that in every detail the working of that institution is carried on by men? To go back to the subject of infant mortality, it would be interesting to find out what proportion the infant death-rate bears to the remaining death-rate amongst the classes where the mother of the family is not compelled by sheer necessity to be wholly or in part the breadwinner. If you could prove that the infant mortality in these classes is out of proportion to the entire death-rate of those classes, you would have done much toward establishing your case against us."

.

MATERFAMILIAS writes much shrewd common sense, and says, in her frank, outspoken

reply:—"I expected a much more convincing attack, as it is easy to find fault even with the best regulated households—or offices—and we poor women are far from pretending, for one moment, that a great deal of what we do could not be better done. But our mentor, in this instance, after many preparatory assertions as to what he was going to do, seems to me to have accomplished very little; and I think any unprejudiced person who has read the papers would conclude they had been indicted under the well-known advice, 'No case, abuse the plaintiff's attorney!'"

"In the first place I maintain that the real point has been shirked and glossed over by 'A Mere Man' in his few opening remarks, and that a fictitious value has been given to this question of household expenses which it does not deserve, praise not being accorded where praise is due.

"We are told he married his wife because he loved her, he has worked hard for her, and, in comparison with his office, what has he got for it? what are his assets? Now, it appears to me that an office is run for one thing, and for one thing only, and that is to make money; but the home is created for a very different reason. It is to provide a companion in his joy and his sorrows, and for the man a loving companion, who endeavors to sustain him in his troubles, and who tends and cares for him

in his times of sickness. A *mother* for his children—one who will educate them in the way they should walk, teach them to fear God, honor their father and mother, and become good and upright men and women.

“ I take it that it is infinitely more necessary that a woman should be a good wife and mother than that she should be somewhat sharper at reducing expenses than a professional housekeeper. ‘ A Mere Man ’ seems to purposely miss these points. He talks of the fictitious value of love; but can love be valued? I think not.

“ Again, he refers to his wife as ‘ not an improving property,’ which is as heartless as it is unfair, because there is no doubt that she is at least as improving a property as he is himself. However, having given the proper prominence to women’s true vocations, against the smallest one of superior housekeeping advocated by ‘ A Mere Man,’ I will now go on to discuss his assertions, and I think it will be easily proved that a house managed upon the lines he suggests would be worse than one run upon any ordinary plan.

“ He opens in Chapter II by the assertion that ‘ nearly all we earn is spent on our homes and *the luxury of our women folk.*’ The last part of the sentence must be met by a flat denial. Does any one, even a ‘ mere man,’ believe within his innermost heart that a woman

spends as much on her luxuries as he does? What about those seven dollar a hundred cigars, and that fourteen dollar a dozen port, which is carefully kept for his own consumption? not to mention those luncheons to business friends, at which champagne and liquors play such a prominent part.

“But we will not press the point; let us on to some ‘practical suggestions.’ Even here, in this paper of ‘proof,’ they are difficult to find; but, as far as I can discover, the chief one is that a discount should be insisted upon from our bakers, butchers, and greengrocers. The passing remark that a woman does not know what her beef and mutton cost in the field is too absurd for serious consideration. Does a man know what his cigars cost in the leaf, or his wines in the grape? And would it be any good if he did?

.

NEW YORK WOMAN takes a somewhat logical tone: —“Conscience tells me there is some—perhaps much—truth in your papers on the ‘Domestic Blunders of Women,’ but I should like to draw attention to a point which I think you, and men generally, overlook. Character—even a woman’s—is to some extent consistent, and the qualities which men usually admire in a woman are, I think, not those which

are correlative with business acumen. There are women who can make a bargain with tradespeople or others with the astuteness of a business man; but it is scarcely likely that such a one will have the grace, *naïveté*, and general winsomeness which a man really reckons among the chief charms of woman.

“In choosing a wife, a man usually desires a womanly woman, and avoids the ‘strong-minded,’—so-called—of the sex. He must be prepared, therefore, to find her wanting in some of the qualities which he would require in a partner of his own sex. At the same time, he may justly expect her to be a reasoning and reasonable being, and able to enter into his views on pecuniary and other matters with intelligence.

“But the training must commence before marriage, and it is very desirable that from first leaving school, a girl should have an allowance, and be shown, if she does not know, how to keep a simple cash account. It should be clearly understood this allowance must not be exceeded, or it will do harm instead of good. I think her father may well require to see her account quarterly, for the first year or two at least, to be sure it is being correctly kept. This forms a basis of accuracy which will be useful in the larger field of housekeeping.

“Given an average woman, I think it an excellent plan for the wife to receive a weekly

allowance to cover all expenses connected with housekeeping, except perhaps coal and servants' wages. It saves all 'bickering' between the two. It should be large enough to cover needful replenishment of household linen and utensils, which may be done gradually with a little management. This plan seems to necessitate the payment of ready money, which you disparage; but I think if the stipulated allowance were adhered to, you would find the method a great saving, even though some interest on the money were lost. This, I think, can be obviated in part, by dealing, as far as possible, at ready money stores, where equal goods are supplied at lower prices."

.

SYBIL stands up bravely for her sex. First:—"I admit that in a sort of whimsical way 'A Mere Man' has cause for at least *some* of his complaints. There are undoubtedly some very badly-managed homes, and there are many women who have no financial capacity at all; but it is not always—or even generally—the women who cannot keep accounts whose homes are uncomfortable, nor the mathematical women whose households are ideal. I have often thought that men—especially businessmen—are apt to carry business principles too far. Why should a home be burdened with

the sordid consideration of whether every transaction with every tradesman or every workman has resulted in the largest possible advantage to oneself and the smallest to him? That appears to be the soul of *business*, but it does not seem very ennobling.

“In my experience—nearly ten years of married life—I have found that butchers are, in a sense, honest. That is, if I go and choose or order a certain joint I get it—I know the price of each joint—and if I order the best I pay for the best. If I do *not* get the best I complain, but seldom have to complain twice. With regard to ‘beating down’ a tradesman, I never do that; but I know women who do, and I also know that they gain nothing by it.

“The ‘Mere Man,’ however, gives no weight to the possibility of women’s lives containing more intellectual duties than haggling over *chops*. If it were not so, it would indeed be asked by womenkind, ‘Is life worth living?’ For my part, I should consider it absolute waste of time to call personally at every shop each time the necessary household purchases had to be made, although my home is ‘buried’ in the country, where the eternal ‘calling for orders’ is unknown, and considerable forethought has to be exercised in order to keep up the household stock of every kind.

“I think the ‘Mere Man’ exaggerates the condescension of man in marrying woman.

After all, a man marries of his own free will, and he *should* have the sense to realize—with his vaunted business capacity—that his household expenses will *increase* and not decrease year by year. I believe most men vaguely fancy that when they furnish a house—say on their marriage—they have bought all they will require in that house for the rest of their natural life; and then when, in a few years, some more saucepans have to be invested in, they feel grieved, and think that some one has been very much to blame. Saucepans will not last many years, however well they are treated, nor will ‘children’s stockings,’ alas! Many weary mothers can testify to that.

“Men have their own business worries—why should they add to them the infinitely more worrying worries of domestic economy? Most women bear these cheerfully, and overcome them tactfully, and contrive to have a smiling welcome for the breadwinner. Could a wife not be trusted to spend sufficiently wisely? If not, does not the mistake lie deeper—in the original choice of a wife? The ‘Mere Man’ overlooks altogether the possibility of the wife’s possessing an income of her own; but perhaps that is beside the question.

“The management of servants is, of course, a serious undertaking, and nothing but experience teaches one the best course to pursue. Doubtless, there is room for much improve-

ment in the training of girls for domestic service, and the desultory way they pick up the little they know is far from an ideal method.

“‘A Mere Man’ says ‘servants are what their mistresses make them.’ To a certain extent they may be, and without doubt a good mistress has a large amount of influence over them; but, then, as every mistress is different, and every servant an individual, it is useless to generalize on such a topic. The family circle—particularly in England—is so isolated, that no rules suitable to a factory or a workshop can be of any avail. Each household is a law to itself.”

.

PETRUCHIO takes up the cudgels for his wife:—“I have had a hard enough task to keep my Katherine’s hands off ‘A Mere Man’ from week to week. With the appearance of his onslaught against a mother’s management of her children, the pent-up volume of indignation has overflowed, quite in her old shrewish style. As she has confiscated my latch-key and knocked off all sporting papers until I reply to ‘A Mere Man’s’ mischievous doctrines, I am compelled to undertake the duty of scribe. So here goes.

“Katherine insists that she can not only ‘put hand upon her heart and truthfully say’

that she knew what 'to do' with our Corisande when the mite brought joy into this household, but she can continue to keep her hand over that organ without flinching and offer priceless advice to parents in general. I can certainly confirm my spouse's assertion that, for some months prior to baby's advent, a perfect library of works, of the 'Advice to Mothers' order, pervaded our residence.

"Prepared indeed! 'This anonymous creature will want to dispute the value of goose oil in cases of croup next,' cries my wife wrathfully. 'A Mere Man!' A mere fool, say I; a crusty old maid or bachelor to boot.

"Katherine is especially incensed over 'A Mere Man's' monstrous ignorance on the subject of short-coating. Every mother worthy of the name knows that a 'three-quartered' costume intervenes between the long and the short periods of infantile draping. As for babies grovelling about in draughts stark-naked, my indignant helpmate considers it a stark-mad idea altogether, only applied to poor little gutter children whom poverty and stupidity impel towards premature dissolution. In fact, she thinks 'A Mere Man's' experiences must be gathered from the slums rather than the well-ordered, middle-class nursery. Katherine adds that she will be happy to demonstrate to *bonâ-fide* visitors the admirable three-quarter sys-

tem as exemplified on the person of our thriving Corisande."

.

These are the views of A MERE WOMAN AND MOTHER:—"In answer to 'A Mere Man' I should say his trumpeter is dead. He speaks of women in three classes—Angels, slum women and cow women. I am sure the sex ought to be highly edified and grateful. As he knew the different classes of women so well, why didn't he choose an angel?

"Paterfamilias owns that he married for love. If he didn't trouble himself about a woman who could manage for him before he was married, why do so now? If he gives love and she returns it, what has he to grumble about? If he married without counting the cost, that's his look-out, not his wife's.

"Again he says: 'My office has improved.' Has he done all the work himself? what about his helpers? Undoubtedly they are good business men, who work and stay with him for the sake of their wives and families. His poor wife, on the other hand, is worried to death to get willing and conscientious helpers even at a high price, as servants are so scarce. They are generally single women who have no one depending on them, and so, in many cases, will not be told how, or what to do, or when to do

186 *The Domestic Blunders of Women*

it. If they cannot have their own way they will leave, as they know they can easily get other places. Not so with his subordinates.

“Again he says ‘there should be nothing simpler in the world than to manage a house, a few servants, and a few children,’ but ‘A Mere Man’ has left out *the master of the house*. Granted men manage restaurants—so they ought—this represents only one branch of woman’s work. The poor wife has to see to the supply of provisions for the whole family, arrange for the cooking, and manage the cook—which is the hardest of all.

“Next, about the children. The woman bears them, rears them, always has them with her except when at school or out with the nurse, whom she can’t always trust, and when they are grown up they give her more anxiety than when young. What man could shield, guide, and counsel girls like a mother?

“The sum and substance of ‘A Mere Man’s’ grumbling seems to be money. It’s a pity he ever loved a woman, for if he had not he might have saved his dollars and had sufficient income to manage some one else’s household.”

.

This is what LEN says:—“Your way of looking upon home as a branch of your business is original; but to require it to show a

profit on paper seems to me sheer nonsense. However, taking it in your own way, my opinion is that if the comforts of home have decreased with you, this, to some extent, reflects on yourself—you are the head of the firm, so, if you were as wise and clever as you say you are, your wife and daughters would not be such a poor dunderheaded lot as you make them out to be.

“Women are much more careful in spending money than you give them credit for. Their method of purchasing when they like and where they like is unquestionably a better plan than what you suggest. For instance, if they tied themselves, as you say, to one butcher, they would have less choice; and as to the discount—well, every tradesman must have a reasonable profit, and if you do not pay the proper price, he will have to cheat somebody, and the probability is that you will yourself suffer.

“Neither do women purchase in such out-of-the-way proportions of the various articles required; they plan things out to a much greater nicety than men could do if they had the task to perform. It is generally the caprice of the man at the table that makes the articles served up appear out of proportion.

“Now, Mr. ‘Mere Man,’ I begin to think you are a very queer stick! After advising that a woman should go to her butcher and get

discount for weekly payments, I find that you censure her because she will insist on paying weekly. I don't wonder at your house being a badly-managed one, because, with such an inconsistent head, nobody would know what to be at. I believe women do quite right in buying their household goods, dresses, etc., for cash; the credit system is often the cause of the purchases exceeding the income, and, therefore, sooner or later bringing trouble.

"There may be some little truth in your charge that women love to spend money, and are unable to account for every shilling they spend; but are men any better in these respects?"

"Your manner of doling the cash out to the woman is rather mean. Where there is a true wife she has as much right to the money as the man has, and where she is taken into his confidence, and the man treats her properly, she will make a better use of household money than he could."

.

COMMON-SENSE contributes a running fire of comment:—"I should like to point out some of the more glaring discrepancies in your articles. To begin with, you do not state the size of your family. 'Your wife and daughters,' evidently no sons, daughters only, shall

we say two, three, or ten? It is impossible to consider the servants' question unless we know the number of the grown-up members of your family.

“ ‘Assets, etc., wife not an improving property.’ Are *you* ‘an improving property?’ is your temper better than it was? etc. ‘Any man could manage a house, etc., to greater advantage than any woman.’ What is that quotation of some people ‘rushing in where angels fear to tread’?—you might look it up. ‘O! glorious power of self opinion, for none are fools in thy dominion.’

“ ‘Butchers make no allowance for bone or fat.’ Do you think for a single moment that any man could induce a monopolist like a butcher to allow for bone, ‘a butcher’s fair profit’? There is not such a thing as a fair profit in the butcher’s business, for it is said that any butcher who sells a beast a week can live, bring up his family, and drive his gig.

“I was once behind the scenes running a large catering business at a big exhibition in the provinces; the manager, a capable business-like German, could make no impression on the butcher, and you should not expect your wife to do so.

“ ‘Fish—provide three pounds mackerel and won’t provide one pound salmon.’ The size of your family being omitted, I can only judge that your wife prefers that all the family shall

partake of fish, while you evidently want that pound of salmon for your own and her consumption, while the children go without!

“ ‘Check for twenty tons of coal paid for in advance.’ What an absurd idea! A business man would place a contract or open order for a given weight to be delivered at such a rate per month at a stated price, and pay for it as he got it—‘when the blind lead the blind,’ etc. Save \$1.00 a ton indeed; it means simply locking up money for a year in advance, and possibly, if the coal merchant dies or levants, losing your money.

“ ‘Housekeeping money, false pretenses, criminal negligence.’ What a nice man you are, what a treat for your neighbors! Think it over, old man, and apologize. ‘Never saw the saucepans or the stockings.’ You imply evidently that your wife never bought them, that it was a mode of thieving. Thank goodness that you have a wife at all, for certainly you don’t deserve one. Buying ‘half the items that are not pressing,’ etc.—why not say your wife is an absolute fool? it would save time.

“ ‘Paying cash destroys credit,’ ‘order goods, and when bills come in, pay something on account,’—and this man pretends to be in business for himself. Well, somebody in his office has to take care of him; that is plain enough. He grudges the interest on the money

paid in weekly accounts, and would like the money in his business, though he recommends paying the coal merchant in advance. Another Solomon, does he not know that by paying weekly, his wife only pays once for goods got? She can remember a week's trivial items, while 'A Mere Fraud' (I mean 'A Mere Man') himself, if he adopted his own system, would be paying for goods received two or three times over; besides, if he wants to calculate how much his housekeeping costs him, it is all plain: compare one week with another, as far back as he likes, of the different tradespeople; and he is, moreover, able to sit and rest at home in an evening without everlastingly hearing that 'Mr. So-and-So has brought his bill and is waiting for the money,' as would be the case under his foolish plan. Let 'A Mere Man' take up the fact that the women he accuses of criminal negligence, false pretenses, and stigmatizes (indirectly) as a thief, has more business acumen than he is possessed of.

" 'Nurses get discount on the milk for the nursery, and the cook for kitchen goods.' Evidently 'Mere Man's' nurse pays the milkman's bills and the cook pays the butcher! 'A little knowledge is a dangerous thing.'

" 'Women's mission is to put the blame on someone else; Eve began it.' Really, Mr. 'Mere Man,' if you must write something, do

for goodness' sake state facts, for you must know that man, to his eternal shame, began it. He put the blame on Eve—'The woman tempted me and I did eat.' Now he was a 'mere man,' I admit, but it was not a manly way of meeting the case. If there had been any society at all, he would have been hounded out of his club, and sent to Coventry for his meanness; if it had been the other way about, would the woman have split upon the man and blamed it upon him? *No*. I have always been a bit ashamed of Adam—but this is a digression.

" 'Bachelors keep their servants for years treasures,' etc., because Bachelor is out two-thirds of his time, they do as they like, and rob him left and right as well.

" 'Sulky female servants will do anything for the master or the young gentlemen.' Oh! blind bat, where is your understanding? *Why is this?* you say; why indeed? If you cannot reason that out, you can't expect to shine very much in your domestic aspirations of a perfect home-life with a man at the helm.

.

SONNY waxes warm and personal. He says:—"I have read with some interest the letter of 'A Mere Man,' and it seems to me that he had better take the advice of a certain gen-

tleman who calls himself a 'Black Philosopher,' and says, 'All you married men had better go and hang yourselves.' He seems to think the world was made for himself alone, and for the special benefit of his money-grubbing propensities. In the opening of his letter he says he married his wife because he loved her. He has worked all his life for the same cause. Does he slander her because he loves her too? I am not married myself, but I know how my mother has managed our house, loved and cared for us all at home, so I must say a word in her defense. Does your correspondent think, when he sees his family growing up around him, his daughters growing into women, that he has lived in vain? Does he not think that they have a mission in life to fill? Does it not give him some sort of satisfaction to think, 'I have done all I can for them, I trust them, they will never be a reproach to me'? If this is no satisfaction to him it ought to be. And then in his old age. Oh! that is the time he will find his satisfaction. 'I shall always have them round me to comfort me when I am old,' is a thought that is uttered by thousands of fathers and mothers, and it comforts them.

"No! Your correspondent is one of those miserable mortals who sees nothing in any other light but that of gain. Gain is the motive power of his life; but some day he must pay

the debt of nature, and then to what use his gold, for he cannot take it with him? He must think all women are fools, and cannot think for themselves. 'They cannot cook,' he says. Now, I am in the city, and go day by day to one of our big restaurants for my lunch, but never have I had anything yet like I get cooked at home, and any sensible woman can cook.

"Men do this, and men do the other; but could a man darn his own socks, sew on his own buttons, and do housework? I very much doubt.

"'A Mere Man' had better go to some place far away from the hands of woman, and live entirely by himself, and see how he gets on. The world will go on very well without him."

.

THE CHERUB tries to hit one nail squarely on the head when he says:—"Many people seem to think that there are only two reasons why a man marries a woman. First, they put the mere desire of possession, and secondly, the getting someone who will manage the house. They are both utterly worthless from the point of view of marriage. Any man with a modest income can procure both. But the one thing that money will never buy is the sweet companionship and sympathy of an intelligent woman whom he loves and who loves

him. Any couple of average intelligence can get rid of the perfectly sordid details that seem to form the bulk of the average married existence.

"You have said, piteously, that your home does not pay, and show an improving return. I cannot see that you have put down the main asset at all; if it does not exist, it is indeed a bankrupt concern, and I am sorry for you."

.

MATERFAMILIAS THE SECOND writes with flowing pen and ever-increasing indignation:—"I can no longer refrain from taking up the cudgels in defense of my sex. I know that most men imagine that a man could manage the house much better than his wife. If this is true, why is it not more frequently done? and how does it happen that when a man loses his wife he does not manage the house himself, but after, at most, a few months of domestic discomfort and mismanagement, invariably marries again?

"This won't do. Is it in the nature of man to let pass *unused* such an opportunity of *displaying his superior powers*?

"Speaking of clubs and hotels, I have this on the authority of men that where an hotel is extra comfortable and successful, you will find a woman at the head; but where a man manages, the waste is often exceptionally great.

“ ‘A Mere Man’ prefaces his second paper with the statement that a man gets nothing out of his earnings save board and lodging, and these of a very unsatisfactory character, owing to the extravagance and mismanagement of his wife. Speaking from the experience of all my married friends, I take exception to this *in toto*, and remark, Where is the man who does not spend more in sundries—such as cigars, drinks, billiards, golf, etc.—than he allows his wife altogether?

“ I pass your correspondent’s sarcastic remarks on *cooking* a chop or potato, and will discuss the ability to purchase: I wonder how many butchers could corroborate his statement, and how many would not rather have the husband to deal with than the wife? Though I admit my husband is a fairly sensible and reasonable man, I have simply dreaded his visit to the butcher, knowing that my resources would be taxed, not so much to cook the meat, as to be able to use, without waste, the excessive quantity.

“ I am glad ‘A Mere Man’ got *his* morning roll at the proper time, and took the trouble to fight for it himself; his wife would not grudge him that privilege. In giving her this assistance he shows the most pleasing feature of his character, and if he will cultivate this spirit in other matters belonging to the house, he will cease to find so much fault. Most husbands

resent being *asked* to give advice upon domestic affairs, and generally reply, 'Please yourself,' or 'Don't bother me.' Such is my experience.

"May I ask if, when man and wife enter the married state, they start as equal partners? If so, why should one give a detailed account of expenditure and not the other? Is it not most galling to a woman who has left a home of comfort or ease, or possibly given up a profitable calling (and, believe me, there are many such), to have to *ask* for money at all, much more to be obliged to account for every penny spent?

"It would save much unhappiness if, at the start of married life, every man would make a definite allowance to his wife, according to his means, over which she should have entire control, and be in no way called upon to account for. Surely no average man would choose for his wife a woman he could not trust to that extent.

"'A Mere Man' must have for his wife a woman much to be pitied, and if she is so easily and invariably gulled by trades-people, we may conclude that it is possible for her to have been deceived by him. Poor woman! If all of us could learn to imitate some of man's strong business habits, and when we go shopping have the forethought to ask each shop-keeper to 'take a drink' as a *preliminary*, we

might then hope to make successful business transactions, and if we only knew how to speculate and *lose* we might be the objects of sympathy rather than blame."

.

SCOTCH LASSIE sends the following apt quotation from J. M. Barriè:—"She loved him, but probably no woman can live with a man for many years without having an indulgent contempt for him, and wondering how he is considered a good man of business."

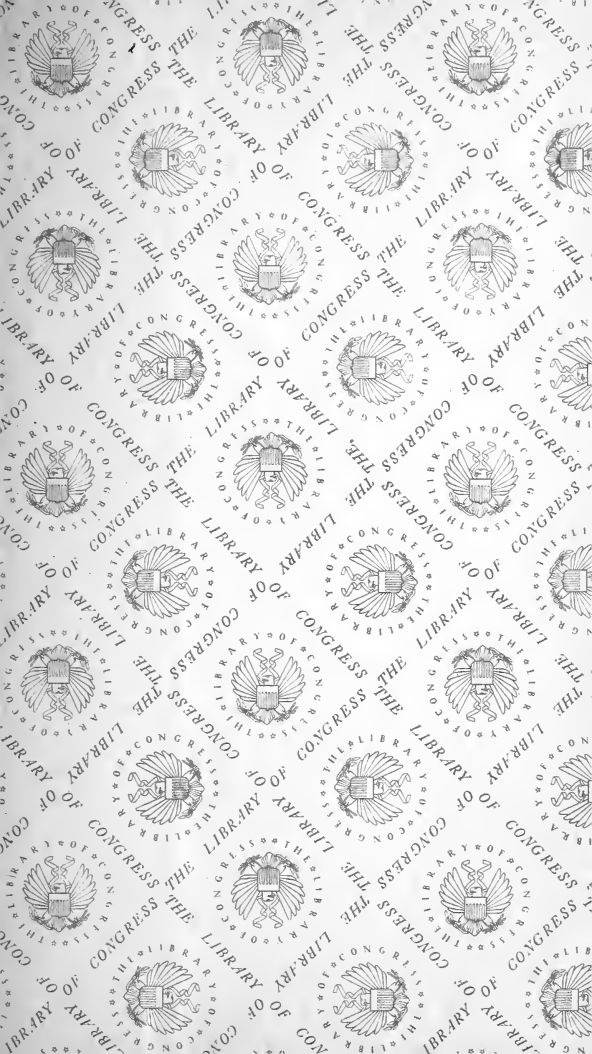
.

THE END



MAR 9 1900





LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 014 184 834 3 ●